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**Written Testimony of
 The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
 Before the
 Human Services Committee
 Tuesday, February 24, 2009**

Re: H.B. 6442, AAC Work Activities Permitted in the Jobs First Employment Services Program

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on H.B. 6442, AAC Work Activities Permitted in the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) Program, which would allow the Department of Labor to require JFES participants to participate in unsubsidized work experience. We encourage you not to pass this bill because unsubsidized work generally does not provide the training or work experience that could lead to self-sufficient employment.

Almost 40% of JFES participants have employment barriers that would hinder their ability to work – 23% do not have a high school diploma, 11% have language barriers, 9% have low math/reading skills, and 4% lack credentials.¹

Of the employed JFES participants, the average wage is \$9² an hour or \$18,720 yearly for a 40 hour full-time job. This wage is far below the self-sufficiency wage needed for a single adult with one child, which would be \$34,873 in Hartford, \$43,678 in Hartford suburbs, \$36,271 in New Haven and \$43,562 in Greater New Haven.³

Rather than placing participants in unsubsidized work, emphasis should be placed on education and training that could lead to a self-sufficient wage. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ Connecticut Department of Labor. *At-A-Glance: Jobs First Employment Services, December 2008.*

² Ibid.

³ Wider Opportunities for Women. *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut, 2008.*