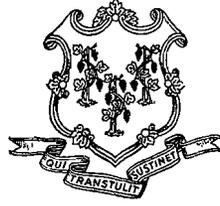


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Written Testimony of The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women Before the Human Services Committee Thursday, March 8, 2007

In Support of:

S.B. 1350, AAC Administration of the State-Administered General Assistance Program

S.B. 1361, AAC Administration of the Temporary Family Assistance Program

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on the above referenced bills on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

There are approximately 20,000 families in Connecticut receiving cash assistance, and almost half (8,100) are "child only cases" where children are being cared for by an adult other than a parent. An additional 2,500 include families with children less than one year of age and an adult caring for another family member. In addition, SAGA is a lifeline for almost 30,000 residents, and women comprise 40% of those with SAGA coverage – or about 12,000 of those with SAGA. The recommendations in these bills would make a significant impact on these families and individuals.

S.B. 1361, AAC Administration of the Temporary Family Assistance Program

PCSW collaborates with the Welfare Working Group, who have developed strategies to assist families and help the state meet the new federal work participation requirements. This bill includes four of the six strategies identified by the Welfare Working Group as sound investments:

1. It establishes a work transition program to provide cash assistance benefits to families who are disqualified for further assistance because they meet federal

work requirements, yet have earnings that are at or below the federal poverty level. This will assist these families while they work to increase their earnings to a self-sufficient level.

2. It makes it possible for many families to access safety net services by opening it up to families who have reached the time limits and have income below the payment standard.
3. It establishes a new time-limit exemption for people who work less than 35 hours a week due to a documented medical impairment.
4. It increases the payment standard to 10% in 2007, and each year thereafter based upon the average for the consumer price index.

The Welfare Working Group also seeks funding to implement two additional strategies:

5. Annualize the \$6.5M for Jobs Services for TFA recipients to \$8.8M. Currently \$5.7M is used for vocational skills training and adult basic education programs and subsidized employment. The balance is used for staff or programs within the Department of Labor and the Department of Social Services (DSS). Increased funding will ensure that the maximum amount is utilized for education and job training to assist families in becoming self-sufficient.
6. Fund a program to assist eligible TFA families to move into the federal SSI program. DSS has started working on "Project SOAR," a program to assist people who are homeless to move into SSI, but it is doing so without additional funding for this initiative.

S.B. 1350, AAC Administration of the State-Administered General Assistance Program

PCSW supports S.B. 1350 which would increase the level of cash assistance from \$200 to \$300 a month. It would also establish the same assistance levels for single unemployable and single transitional individuals, rather than having separate levels for each group. Increased financial assistance would benefit these individuals in obtaining basic necessities.

We urge your support of these proposals