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## PERMANENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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Testimony of  
Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW  
Legislative Director  
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
Before the  
Human Services Committee  
Thursday, February 28, 2008

### In Support of:

**SB 416, AA Eliminating Fee for Identity Cards and Appropriating Funds for the Prevention of Homelessness.**

**HB 5619, AAC Reimbursement Rates to Child Care Providers Under the Child Care Subsidy Program**

**HB 5622, AAC Expansion of Shelter Services for Victims of Household Abuse and an Appropriation for Legal Services Programs for Indigent Persons.**

**HB 5623, AAC Eligibility for Emergency Housing Assistance from the Department of Social Services**

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the committee. I am Natasha Pierre, the Legislative Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on several bills before you today.

35<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
PCSW

*the State's leading force for women's equality*

**HB 5622, AAC Expansion of Shelter Services for Victims of Household Abuse and an Appropriation for Legal Services Programs for Indigent Persons.**

PCSW supports passage of HB 5622 which would provide funding for services for domestic violence victims through access to host homes, motels and referrals to long term shelters, and 24-hour on site staff.

Currently there are 18 domestic violence programs throughout the state that provide hotline, shelter, criminal court based, police department, and community education services. In FY 2006, they provided services to 53,006 victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is an on-going problem – we cannot predict when or where it will occur. When a victim seeks help to escape a violent situation it must be immediately provided. However, only three programs have 24- hour staff, and may not have the ability to shelter someone due to lack of space. It is imperative that domestic violence victims receive help when they reach out for it, and this bill would provide more services to do so.

**HB 5619, AAC Reimbursement Rates to Child Care Providers Under the Child Care Subsidy Program**

PCSW supports passage of H.B. 7302, which would reimburse licensed providers of child care services, participating in the child care subsidy program, at a rate that is 75% of the weekly market rent.

The cost of care can be very high, and requires a significant share of a family's monthly earnings – most families in Connecticut spend 30% to 40% of their income on childcare.<sup>1</sup> The child care subsidy program is a work support for low and moderate-income families who need help paying for early care and education while parents are at work, in school or in training. However, the program reimburses providers far below market rate, and is limited to families leaving TFA, or those between 50-75% of the state median income.

I represent the PCSW on the Child Day Care Council and the Trinity College Community Child Center, and I hear providers at every meeting talk about the child care subsidy program – the inadequate reimbursement rates and the delays in receiving payment. These providers complain, but they still provide care and education to the children whether or not they are paid on time or adequately. They supplement the cost of care by absorbing the difference in rates paid and the actual cost of education. They hold fundraisers, seek donations, shift money around, and pray they make the budget every month. When asked why they continue to educate that child even though they aren't paid the going rate, they say: "what am I supposed to do? I can't kick that child out of my program," or

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<sup>1</sup> Diana Pearce. The Real Cost of Living in 2005: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut, Office of Workforce Competitiveness. State of Connecticut. 2005.

“even if I bill the parent, they can’t afford it.”

The PCSW wholeheartedly support this proposal to increase the payment rates to providers. We also encourage increasing family eligibility levels to 75% of the state median income, so that more families can access affordable, quality early care and education.

**SB 416, AA Eliminating Fee for Identity Cards and Appropriating Funds for the Prevention of Homelessness.**

**HB 5623, AAC Eligibility for Emergency Housing Assistance from the Department of Social Services**

PCSW supports passage of SB 416 and HB 5623 which would provide funding for emergency shelters and other supportive housing for the homeless, and for eviction and foreclosure prevention programs.

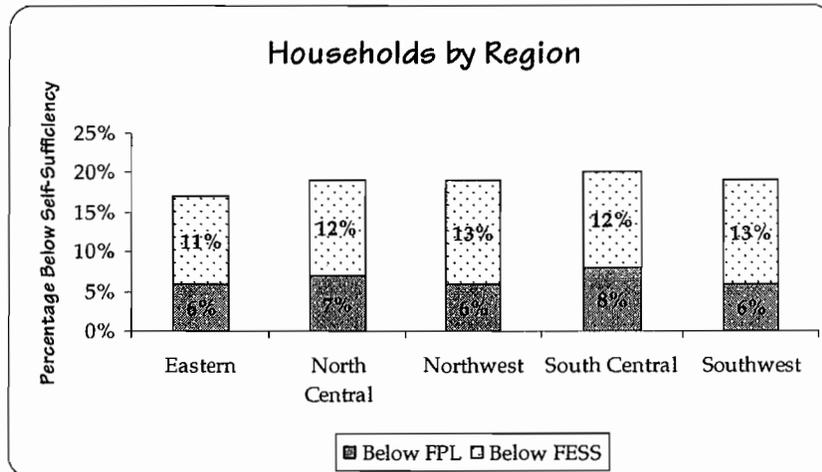
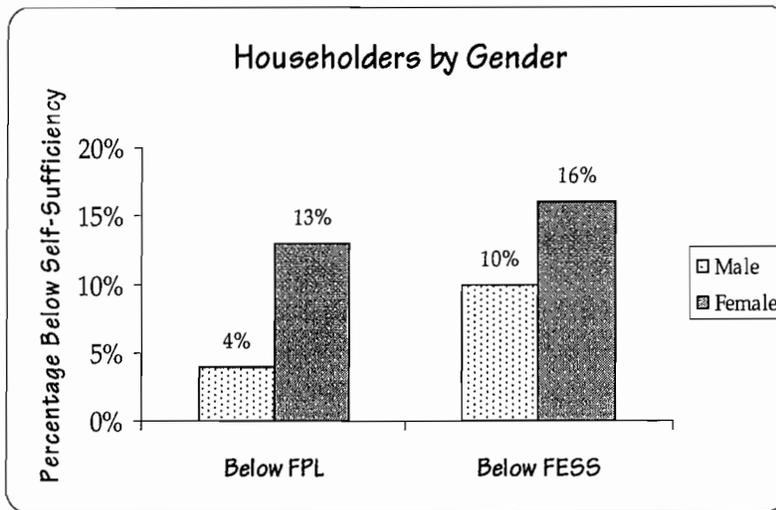
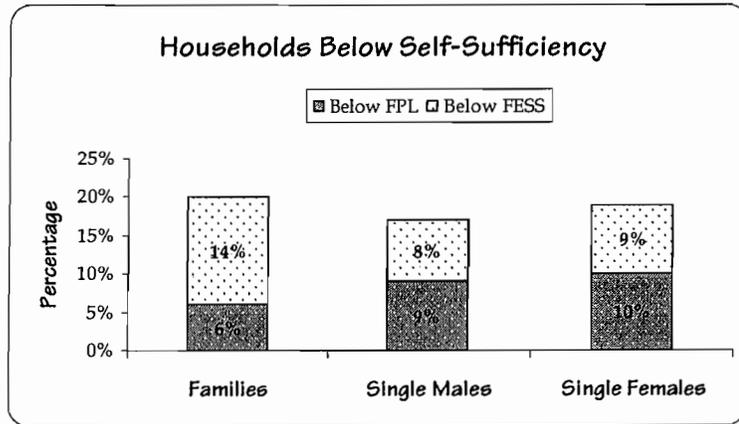
PCSW has focused its attention on the need for safe and affordable housing for women and their children because it is a problem that all women are faced with, whether they are low- or middle-income, single or heads of households. PCSW is addressing the foreclosure issue because women have become a key component in the real estate market. For women, the impact of problems in the lending industry crosses age, class, and racial lines as well as neighborhoods. According to both the Consumer Federation of America and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, women borrowers are overrepresented in the sub prime lending market. Across the economic spectrum, women receive less favorable terms than similarly situated men on home purchase, refinance, and home improvement loans.

Twenty-percent of Connecticut working families do not have enough income to meet their basic costs of living based upon the family economic self-sufficiency standard (FESS).<sup>2</sup> Of the 20%, female head of households represent 29% vs. 14% of male head of households.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Diana M. Pearce, Ph.D. *Overlooked and Undercounted: Where Connecticut Stands*. Prepared for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, June 2007 – also source for self-sufficiency charts.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



According to a 2006 report issued by the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, *The Real Cost of Living in 2005: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut*, if Connecticut families were self-sufficient, they would spend 17% to

27% of their income on housing. But many families are not self-sufficient, so in fact many are spending 30% of their household incomes on rent.<sup>4</sup>

This lack of self-sufficiency results in homelessness, inability to pay high rental costs, and the inability to keep up with mortgage payments. In FFY 2006, almost 1,300 families (1,293) sought shelter.<sup>5</sup> Of those families, single females headed 82%, single males headed 8%, and 10% were two-parent families.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, over 10,000 single adults (10,116) sought shelter; of that population almost 25% (24.8%) were women.<sup>7</sup> In the past year, we have received several calls from single women, who do not have substance abuse issues or dependent children, who cannot afford a place to live. When considering proposals, we urge you to look at this population as well.

We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>4</sup> Partnership for Strong Families. In 2004, 45.9% of renting household paid over 30% of income on rent.

<sup>5</sup> Annual *Homeless Shelter Demographic Report for FFY 2006*. CT Department of Social Services via CT Coalition to End Homelessness accessed 2/07 at [www.cceh.org](http://www.cceh.org).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.