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State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



**PERMANENT COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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**Written Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Commerce Committee
Tuesday, March 4, 2008**

In Support of: SB 551, AAC Nanotechnology

Senator Lebeau, Representative Berger and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) and a group it convenes, The Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP), which represents women ages 18 to 35, on the above referenced bill.

The PCSW supports SB 551, AAC Nanotechnology. As the State looks to build the workforce of nanotechnology the PCSW encourages specific outreach to young women to build the number of young women in this field.

Nanotechnology is a new field with great opportunity for the development of the younger workforce. Connecticut has shown a strong interest in this field already. The president of the Connecticut Nanotechnology Initiative stated that, "Connecticut is well positioned to become a leader in Nanotechnology." In addition he states that many industries will be impacted by

**35th anniversary
PCSW**

the State's leading force for women's equality

the development of nanotechnology including: biotech, pharmaceuticals, aeronautics, defense, transportation, environment and field cells.¹

Currently, there are a significantly smaller number of women involved in nanotechnology. According to the National Science Foundation, less than 15 percent of engineering doctorates awarded in 1999 went to women, and women earned only about 23 percent of doctorates in the physical sciences.² Consequently, women make up only a quarter of the engineering and science workforce in the United States.³ A viable workforce is necessary in order for Connecticut to substantially profit from nanotechnology.

The PCSW thanks you for your continued support of the development of nanotechnology and looks forward to working with the committee to ensure that women are specifically targeted in all nanotechnology workforce development initiatives.

¹ <http://www.nanotech-now.com/CNI-release-10142003.htm>

² The National Science Foundation

³ *ibid*



FACTS

about
Connecticut's
young women

Young Women's Leadership Program

a project of the Connecticut General Assembly's
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Keeping Young Professional Women in the State of Connecticut

Connecticut has lost more 20-34 year olds since 1990 than any other state.¹ The shrinking labor pool of young professionals and families may deter business from coming, staying or expanding in the state. Over the next 10 years the baby boomer generation will hit retirement age and Connecticut will face a shortage of skilled, educated workers.

There are several ways the State of Connecticut can encourage young women professionals to stay and seek employment in the state, ranging from more affordable housing to providing job training in new emerging fields and supporting workplace friendly initiatives.

Young Women and Housing

Consumers in their 20s are more likely to purchase property at a younger age than their older family members. These individuals are not necessarily waiting for marriage or even a long-term relationship before becoming homeowners². Single females represent the fastest growing segment of the home buyers market. The proportion of single women buying homes has increased, from 14% in 1995 to 21% while the single men make up 9% of buyers.³

Many young people are deterred from staying in the State of Connecticut because of the high cost of housing. From 1995-2000, Connecticut lost over 6,000 young, single college educated persons. This means the State has spent time, energy and money on providing an educated workforce for other states.⁴

¹ HomeConnecticut.org.

² <http://www.floridahomeloan.com/2006/09/younger-first-time-home-buyers-enter.html>

³ <http://www.realtor.org/rmodaily.nsf/0/ec9b3798c397dc42862571ea00594a7c?OpenDocument>

⁴ HomeConnecticut.org

Recommendations

- Support the development of affordable housing, expand financial literacy programs, create incentives to save, improve access to mainstream financial services and improve affordability and equity of mortgage and insurance products.

Job Training and Educational Equality

As the state looks to build the workforce of nanotechnology, “green jobs”, the film industry and other fields there is great potential to encourage young women to stay in the state by providing more job training for these new emerging fields.

For example, nanotechnology is a new field with great opportunity for the development of the younger workforce. Connecticut has shown a strong interest in this field. The president of the Connecticut Nanotechnology Initiative stated that, “Connecticut is well positioned to become a leader in Nanotechnology.” In addition he states that many industries will be impacted by the development of nanotechnology including: biotech, pharmaceuticals, aeronautics, defense, transportation, environment and field cells.⁵ A viable workforce is necessary in order for Connecticut to substantially profit from nanotechnology.

Recommendations

- Strengthen gender equity in career and technical education, prioritize non-traditional [including Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)] training programs for women and expand career ladders initiatives.

Workplace Friendly Initiatives

Another important factor in young women’s career choices is job quality. Without the availability of work supports such as paid sick days, women often lose pay for a sick child, and low-wage working women are the most likely to financially suffer.⁶ Jobs that provide paid sick days, paid family and medical leave and quality, affordable health insurance are much more attractive to young female workers. In addition, their loyalty to their company is significantly greater than if they were in a job without these work supports⁷.

Recommendations

- Ensure that workers have paid sick days they can use for themselves *and* their families, guarantee workers the right to paid vacation, increase access to health care through public insurance, and support paid family and medical leave initiatives.

⁵ <http://www.nanotech-now.com/CNI-release-10142003.htm>

⁶ The National Partnership for Women and Families

⁷ <http://www.paidleave.org/basics.html>