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**PERMANENT COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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

In Support of:

**SB 562, AAC Increased Access to the Medicaid Program for the Medically
Needy Elderly and Disabled**

SB 567, AAC the CT Home Care Program for the Elderly

Senator Harris, Representative Villano and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on the above referenced bill. This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), and the Connecticut Women's Health Campaign (CWHC), a statewide coalition of organizations representing consumers, providers and policy experts who have been committed to and working for the health and well-being of Connecticut women and girls for over ten years.

Medicaid and the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly assists a significant number of women to receive medical care and remain in their homes rather than being institutionalized. Women represent 58.9% the total elderly population in the state of Connecticut,¹ and 15.13% of women in poverty

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Fact Finder.

in the state.² Women also represent 59% of all people 65 and older in Connecticut who rely on social security benefits; without social security, 46% of elderly women in Connecticut would be poor.³ This limited- or low-income makes it very likely that they will seek services through the Medicaid program and the Connecticut Home Care Program.

PCSW and CWHC support SB 562, which would require the Department of Social Services to exercise the federal option to permit the use of less restrictive methodology in determining the income limit when making Medicaid eligibility determinations for persons who are aged, blind or disabled. Currently, Connecticut provides Medicaid coverage for people who are elderly and disabled with incomes of up to 60% of the federal poverty level. We urge the Legislature to provide Medicaid coverage for people who are elderly and/or disabled with incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level, which is the same income eligibility for parents and caregivers of HUSKY children.

PCSW and CWHC also support SB 567, which would provide personal care assistance services and increase reimbursement rates to providers of home care services under the Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly. Adequate funding would insure that elders and people with disabilities who need help with activities of daily living but have limited family support, have cognitive impairment, and/or have needs that change and progress over time are able to remain in their homes, rather than in long-term care institutions.

The U. S. Supreme Court ruling in Olmstead v. L. C.⁴ mandates that services be available to meet the needs of such persons wishing to live in the community. Connecticut's Long-Term Care Plan specifically states, "The overall goal for Connecticut's long-term care system should be to offer individuals the services and supports of their choice in the least restrictive setting." But more important than either of these directives is the desire of the elderly and people with disabilities to remain independent through self-directed care in a community setting.

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

² U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, 2004.

³ Social Security Administration, *Women and Social Security*; National Women's Law Center, *Social Security: Women, Children and the States*, 2005.

⁴ *Olmstead v. L. C.*, 119 S. Ct. 2176 (1999).