



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

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TO: Joint Committee on Appropriations

FROM: Joni Czajkowski
Sr. Director, Advocacy and Government Relations

DATE: February 11, 2009

Re: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
African American Affairs Commission
Commission on Children
Office of Healthcare Advocate

Thank you Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and the members of the Appropriations Committee for allowing the American Heart Association to submit written comment on the topic of the elimination of the noted Commissions. The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to support and advocate for public policies that will help build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke with an impact goal to reduce coronary heart disease, stroke and risk by 25 percent by 2010.

Over the years, American Heart Association has had the distinct pleasure of working collaboratively with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, African American Affairs Commission, Commission on Children and most recently with the Office of Healthcare Advocate. The AHA urges legislators and the Governor not to eliminate these highly productive and necessary Commissions.

The AHA's 2009 Policy Goals for Connecticut include Chain of Survival, Stroke, Access to Care, Obesity Prevention, Tobacco Control, Quality and Availability to Care and Women and Heart Disease. It's no wonder why the AHA is urging lawmakers and the Governor to not eliminate these Commissions. The missions of the AHA and the Commissions in question are perfectly aligned and need one another to hit our shared goals.

The American Heart Association would be hard pressed to achieve the 2010 impact goal without the tireless dedication and passion of our partners particularly from our partners at the state's Commissions. The AHA does not endorse one Commission over another and fully appreciates the value that each has on the residents of Connecticut. The AHA has many integration examples that can be shared but selected a few with our partners at the African American Affairs Commission.

The AHA's Cultural Health Initiatives Department currently works with the AAAC to address cardiovascular health disparities in the African American community. The African American Affairs Commission continues to be a strong partner of American Heart Association and has truly combined efforts to initiate prevention messages that aim to lower heart disease and stroke in Connecticut's African American communities.

- On January 13, 2007 the African American Affairs Commission partnered with the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the American Heart Association to address Heart Disease and women. This particular event focused on women of color as a result increased health disparity of Heart Disease in black women. This particular event, Search Your Heart Goes Red engaged congregation members from churches throughout the state.
- Executive Director, Glenn Cassis consistently speaks out on health related issues including Heart Disease and Stroke. He is an ambassador to our Power to End Stroke campaign and provides awareness to the African American community about stroke.
- The AHA continues to be a proud financial supporter of the AAAC Annual Classic Awards program celebrating representatives in the community that have displayed exemplary service in their communities.

The message in today's proceedings can not be lost. The Commissions on the chopping block fulfill the needs of so many men, women and children in our state. I can not fathom the day when I may be unable to call my public healthy advocacy partners to ask for their expert opinions or requesting their presence at a community event. If these Commissions are eliminated who will pick up the slack on an already burdened system?

On behalf of the American Heart Association, I would thank the Chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee for their time and attention.