

Testimony of Shon Missouri
Before the Appropriations Committee
In Support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on bill

My name is Shon Missouri, and I am a member of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades. I am here to testify in support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

In 2004, I was a single parent, earning minimum wage, going from job to job, not really satisfied with what I was doing or where my life was going. I was finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet as a single parent. Then I found out about the pre-apprenticeship program that the PCSW ran, and I leapt at this opportunity.

I realized very early on how fortunate I was. PCSW's training program prepared me for a career in the skilled trades. I was actually educated in the world of construction. I wasn't just given a job, I was given the skills to earn a living wage. I had right people and guidance during my training. This wasn't a free ride, I had to work extremely hard to get into an apprenticeship program.

Not only did I know exactly what I was getting into, a career with equal pay, health insurance, and retirement benefits, job security. I had the confidence to stand by those with more experience and to learn from them. I started work as a painter's apprentice within days of graduating from PCSW's pre-apprenticeship program, and have worked steadily ever since. I will gain journey status within the next 6 months.

How has this changed my life? Because of the PCSW....

- I have job security.
- I earn a livable wage.
- I have medical and dental benefits.
- I have retirement benefits.
- I am extremely proud of my career.
- I am more confident in myself and my abilities.
- My children will grow up in a household that shows them security.
- My children will see by example that women can do anything.

What I am basically trying to say, is getting rid of the PCSW would totally be disrespectful to the women who need something to strive and believe in, because I know having had the opportunity to have worked with PCSW made me a better person.