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**Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing**

**In Support of the Human Rights Commissions**

**SB840**

**March 16, 2009**

**Submitted By: Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC  
President**

SENATOR Slossberg, REPRESENTATIVE Spalone, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, I am Sherry Ostrout, the elected President of the National Association of Social Workers. I speak on behalf of NASW/CT representing over 3400 members. I submit this public testimony in support of the human rights Commissions.

During this time of extraordinary financial challenge it is of utmost importance, to maintain the human rights commissions that provide the non-partisan, research based public policy analysis that we can rely upon. We rely upon the Commissions to analyze public policy impact, national trends and provide Connecticut specific recommendations on efficiencies all within the important context of an independent voice.

If this expertise or independent voice was duplicated in any other legislative or executive capacity, NASW would not be providing this testimony. The Commission's are not redundant and they are not duplicative.

NASW has had a strong working relationship with the Commission on Aging, in particular. NASW has embraced the recommendation of the Connecticut Long-Term Care Needs Assessment as a blueprint for our State. The Long-Term Care Needs Assessment is a direct result of the skilled leadership of Julie Evans Starr, Executive Director of the Commission on Aging. The Commission led efforts and facilitated a strong collaboration of the long term care community and the legislature. The Needs Assessment is the most comprehensive analysis of long term care issues that impact our State and provides proven recommendations both programmatic and financial.

During a time where long term care issues and costs are growing at alarming rates, during a time of enormous expansion of the older adult population we need the Commission on Aging to help lead our state as the demands, we know, will not diminish. Connecticut citizens have not stopped growing older and in fact, the population of those over 65 years of age is projected to grow by 64% by 2030. In this fiscal year alone long-term care consumes 56 % of the Medicaid budget.

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers in Connecticut and our 3,400 members, we ask this Committee to support the Commission's through supportive funding for this critical and necessary independent work.