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# PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

*The State's leading force for women's equality*

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**Testimony of**  
**Commissioner Adrienne Farrar Houel, Chair**  
**Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Wednesday, December 9, 2009**

**Re: Governor's Budget Deficit Mitigation Plan**

My name is Adrienne Farrar Houel. I am the President of the Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Inc., a 501C3 community development corporation that creates and supports green businesses and trains our workforce for green jobs in this expanding sector of our economy. I am a wife, mother of three adult children, a daughter and the current Chair of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. I am the face of women who are impacted by the work of the PCSW. I am the PCSW. Through my work in community and economic development, I meet women across the state who shoulder family responsibilities under difficult and unequal circumstances that include wage disparities, job discrimination, and frequently limited access to relevant healthcare, amidst concerns relating to housing, asset building, education, job training and small business development opportunities. Listening to the women of Connecticut, I know that PCSW's work is not done. Women's issues are family issues and touch everyone in the state including our masculine counterparts.

It was only a few months ago that we came before you to testify against the Governor's recommendation to eliminate the PCSW. And, we are back again, this time having seen cuts of nearly 60%, asking you to preserve the commission. I am disappointed that PCSW is on the chopping block again. I understand, as well as anyone, the challenging times the State is facing and we at the PCSW have already done our part by anticipating the crisis and bringing solutions to it while continuing to serve the women of Connecticut.

PCSW has been bringing the voices of women to the State Capitol for thirty-six years, and through all of that time, we've been at the forefront of continuing progress for women in our state. PCSW is the only nonpartisan comprehensive state institution that evaluates laws and policies for their impact on the lives of women and their families. Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, State agencies, state leaders and the public on all matters concerning women. We represent a small investment that produces a sizeable and valuable return. Because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, and women with health care concerns such as breast cancer and osteoporosis, women business owners, parents seeking child support, women leaving welfare for work, childcare workers, and women entering nontraditional occupations. Because of the work of the PCSW our state has been recognized as a national leader on the issues of women's economic security, health and safety and gender discrimination, battles still faced by women today.

As you know the PCSW monitors over 200 bills per year and testifies on upwards of 75 of them. The agency provides not only expertise and data to inform the public policy decisions you and your colleagues make, it's the voice of more than half the state's population. The PCSW represents all women in the state, regardless of political affiliation, geography, wealth -- or the lack of it, influence -- or the lack of it, race, faith, age or educational level. These women are your constituents, and they depend upon the informed, unbiased, non-partisan analysis the PCSW provides.

At its current budget level, the PCSW costs the state just 32 cents for each woman over the age of 18 years. That does not seem like a lot to pay to protect women's economic security, health and safety or to eliminate discrimination. I am worth 32 cents, and you are, and every woman in this room is. I dare say we are all worth a great deal more, and this allotment is -- by anyone's standard -- a bargain.

Please stand up against the Governor's proposed elimination. Yes, these hard times are affecting us all. But the PCSW took a very hard hit in the last budget cycle, and the women of Connecticut -- and their families -- have already borne the brunt of the budget crisis. We are NOT the bloat of state government. This is one agency that is effective and hard-working. It makes a difference in the lives of women across the state. You yourselves commended us only months ago on our stellar application of the RBA process. As the Chair of the PCSW, I am privileged to see this work up close, and I can guarantee that this is a lean, gutsy and vital commission. Please keep it that way.

Thank you for your time today and for this opportunity to share my concerns.