National
Multiple Sclerosis
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**Testimony in support of**

**The Commission on Aging and**

**The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**

**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing, February 18, 2010**

Senator Harp, Representative Candelaria, Senator Debicella, Representative Hetherington, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee and the Legislative Subcommittee,

My name is Susan Raimondo and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy and Programs for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter. I am also the family care giver representative to the CT Long Term Care Advisory Council and I serve on the Money Follows the Person Steering Committee. I have been involved in advocacy, providing services and in policy development assisting elders and persons with disabilities for over 30 years in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about our concerns regarding the proposed elimination of the Commission on Aging and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. The National Multiple Sclerosis Society has strong partnerships with the Commission on Aging and with the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and its affiliate, the Connecticut Women's Health Campaign.

These two Commissions are an essential part of the non-partisan programs that are working to support the needs of Connecticut's elders and women. Although these two commissions' titles indicate that they are helping women and elders, in reality their superb work reaches way beyond the scope of their title.

Both agencies are independent, yet provide robust leadership in the community. Their work on issues around economic security, workforce development, long term care, health care and their timely research and initiatives to save money are crucial given the horrific budget challenges that our state faces. The Commission on Aging and the PCSW operate with small budgets, maximize the use of volunteers, research and facilitate understanding of many of our state's challenges all while developing outstanding community partnerships which can help to broker important relationships that play a role in helping to solve many of our state's problems.

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These two commissions not only provide the leadership, but actually get the work done! Examples include:

- The Commission on Aging (CoA) improves access to information for older adults, persons with disabilities, families and caregivers by working with OPM to create and now maintain the state's Long-Term Care web site. The web site received over 80,000 visits last year alone (www.ct.gov/longtermcare).

- CoA leads efforts to mandate and fund the state's first comprehensive Long-Term Care Needs Assessment, a roadmap to planning for the future needs in our state.

- CoA work has been successful in bridging across multiple generations by working with schools statewide to link them with Earth's Elders, a FREE unique school curriculum that connects students with older adults in their communities.

- The CT Women's Health Campaign and PCSW are responsible for significant changes in access to and provision of health care services for women in our state through legislation and partnerships that have:

    - Improved access to gynecological health care services for women of all ages who are living with disabilities.

    - Banned the use of "drive-through" childbirths, Caesarian sections, and mastectomies.

- PCSW championed the rights of all workers by creating legislation that led to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

- The Commission on Aging and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women have provided support that lead to the successful passage of the CT Home Care Program for Disabled Adults which is serving people with degenerative neurological conditions who are between the ages of 18 and 64. This provides an alternative to expensive nursing home care. The CHCPDA program can save the state $2,055,576 each year.

- The two commissions also actively working on ways to increase savings in our state budget as well as working to find new ways to maximize existing and develop new revenue sources.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to reinstate funding for these two essential commissions which provide much greater savings that the expense of their small budgets. In these times of economic crisis, it seems very foolish to eliminate the Commission on Aging and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women.

Thank you.