

Testimony from the Community Fund for Women and Girls, a component fund of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Helene A. Robbins, Vice President, The Private Bank, Wells Fargo Company
Chair, Community Fund for Women & Girls

Good morning, Legislators, Commissioners, guests and citizens of Connecticut who are here today in support of The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. My name is Helene Robbins, I am a Vice President with Wells Fargo Private Bank and I am here today as the Chair of The Community Fund for Women and Girls, a component fund of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

Women are responsible for 80% of philanthropic giving in the United States, but funding that targets the specific needs of women and girls is less than 10% of all philanthropic funding. Women's Funds, of which there are nine (9) in the State of Connecticut, help correct that imbalance by reflecting women's priorities and are a vehicle for mostly women to make sure that these important gender specific programs and issues receive attention and get funded.

Studies by the Women's Funding Network show that women's philanthropy specifically champions social change. The grants awarded are a source of leverage for additional funding and are known to fund grassroots and "out of the box" solutions, filling a mainstream funding gap and yielding results that is disproportionate to the number of dollars invested. Women's fund possess unique knowledge, values and expertise, are solution builders whose investment ripples broadly through the communities they support and often leads to lasting social change.

The nine women's funds in Connecticut collectively grant about \$700,000 per year to programs for women and girls.

In Greater New Haven, the Fund for Women & Girls focuses on investments in education and job training, health and safety, including violence against women, and political participation. These areas represent core issues for women and girls and where our grants can have the most impact. We arrived at them based on the data and recommendations of the PCSW.

An example of this is **All Our Kin, Inc.** To support the Family Child Care Toolkit licensing project to support women business owners in becoming family childcare providers, to improve the quality and quantity of kith and kin care that in turn provides working parents with childcare. The Fund for Women and Girls awarded a \$10,000 grant to All Our Kin in 2005 to help launch this project. The impact of such a small investment has yielded significant and measurable results. All Our Kin has leveraged that modest grant to obtain additional funding totaling \$500,000. The toolkit project has helped 150 women achieve licensure, run their own businesses which serve over 1,200 children. Their annual incomes have jumped 300% from \$3,750 before licensure, to \$20,000 per year in just two years time and now earn between \$30-35,000 annually. This income supports families, allows providers to live independent of public assistance and provides healthy, safe and loving childcare, allow more mothers to work to support their families as well. This is but one example of how women's funds and The Community Fund for Women & Girls grants demonstrate what the studies show.

These CT women's funds were not established when women were still considered chattel, or when women were fighting for the right to vote, nor have they been in existence since the 1960's or 70's; the first fund for W&G was established in 1993. The General Assembly's actions 36 years ago, in creating the PCSW acknowledged that equality for women had not yet been achieved. It should come as no surprise that we're still not there yet. There are issues that remain inequitable for women, not the least of which is pay equity which, in the last several years has reverted rather than advanced. Our women's fund works in collaboration with the PCSW to identify trends and opportunities to create change for women.

The Community Fund for Women and Girls serves a region of 315,000 voting women. In January, 2010, the fund awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Foundation for Connecticut Women in support of the PCSW. We wish to draw attention to its importance to our state, our fund and the women of Greater New Haven. We depend on the PCSW to inform our decisions, make them strategic and effective, to reach our mutual goal of true equality for our grandmothers, our mothers, our daughters, our granddaughters, our sisters, - for all of us.