NASW National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

In Support of the Human Rights Commissions
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Submitted By: Sherry Ostrout, MSW, CMC
President

SENATOR HARP, REPRESENTATIVE GERAGOSIAN, and members of the Appropriations Committee. On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter, representing over 3400 members, I submit this public testimony in support of the 5 human rights Commissions.

NASW, for years, has provided informed positions on a number of important topics as it relates to our social work members and those we serve through social work services. We create a legislative agenda and establish priorities through our membership networks and committees. The NASW Board of Directors has passed a resounding and unanimous priority resolution to support the maintenance of the five human rights Commissions -- Aging, Children, Women, Latino and African American affairs.

During this time of extraordinary financial challenge it is desperately and 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 department NASW would not be providing this testimony. The Commission's are not redundant, they are not duplicative and they are not fluff.

The Commission on Aging, as one example, has a proven history of bringing providers, advocates, the executive and legislative branches together over initiatives that, in this year alone, led to recommendations that can save the state $600 million dollars. 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.

In fact, last spring, the Commission on Aging identified more than $11 million in new federal funds for our state that do not require additional state expenditures. Despite their success, the Commission was then hit with a 53% budget cut, reducing their budget to about $230,000 annually. With unwavering dedication to the state's older adult population, the Commission continues to seek and offer ways to streamline state government, while improving programs and services, as well as to maximize federal funds coming into the state.

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