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**Testimony of  
Teresa C. Younger, Executive Director  
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
Before the  
Labor and Public Employees Committee  
February 10, 2011**

**RE: HB. 5174, AAC State Employees and Training to Deal with Workplace Violence  
H.B. 5465, AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees.**

Senators Prague and Guglielmo, Representatives Zalaski and Rigby, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in response to the introduction of **HB. 5174, AAC State Employees and Training to Deal with Workplace Violence** and **H.B. 5465, AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees**.

**H.B. 5465, AAC Family and Medical Leave Benefits for Certain Municipal Employees**

H.B. 5465 would grant paraprofessionals the right to family and medical leave. Passage of this bill would benefit paraprofessionals who work in public elementary and secondary schools.

*CT Specific Data*

- Families incur income losses ranging from over \$300 to more than \$3,500 per year due to lost wages from the wage-earner's own illnesses.<sup>1</sup>
- Families incur losses ranging from \$800 to \$6,900 per year due to lost wages during a family illness.<sup>2</sup>

As you are aware, the PCSW has long supported paid family and medical leave proposals. We have done so because balancing the needs of work and family is now a priority for most workers. Additionally, the occupations which continue to deny FMLA benefits to its employees are occupations that are female dominated, such as the paraprofessionals addressed in this bill.

<sup>1</sup> Women's Union. *The Real Cost of Living and Getting Health Care in Connecticut: The Health Economic Sufficiency Standard*. Prepared for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the Foundation for Connecticut Women, February 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

According to the paraprofessional's union, United Electrical Union Local 22, paraprofessionals work 6.25 hours a day (1,125 a school year), rather than the required 1,250 hours needed to be eligible for FMLA. Paraprofessionals are not allowed to work more than 6.25 hours a day, and therefore should not be penalized for it. Passage of this bill would assist families to care for themselves and family members when they are ill, and add some protection against loss of income.

### **HB. 5174, AAC State Employees and Training to Deal with Workplace Violence**

HB. 5174 would require the Department of Administrative Services to develop an employee training program to instruct state employees on workplace violence awareness, prevention and preparedness. Passage of this bill would benefit all state workers by providing a safe working environment.

#### *National Data*

- Bullying is 4 times more prevalent than illegal forms of "harassment."<sup>3</sup>
- 37% of American workers, an estimated 54 million people, have been bullied at work.<sup>4</sup>
- 49% of American workers, 71.5 million workers, are affected when witnesses are included.<sup>5</sup>
- 58% of all perpetrators are women.
- 81% of female bully's targets women
- 71% of male bully's targets are women.

Not only can workplace bullying have a detrimental affect on a person's health, it can also have negative affects for employers. In addition to obvious financial costs such as increased turnover rates of staff, employers can also be harmed if their business environment is seen as a hostile work environment.<sup>6</sup> Passage of this bill would address safety and security in the workplace.

We appreciate continued attention to these matters, and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <<http://bullyinginstitute.org/zogby2007/wbi-zogby2007.html>>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.