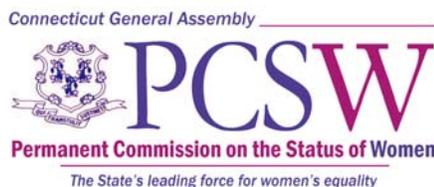


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Testimony of
Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW
Policy & Legislative Director
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Public Health Committee
February 9, 2011

Re: H.B. 5048, AA Requiring Certificate of Need Approval for the Termination of Inpatient and Outpatient Services by a Hospital

Senators Stillman and Welch, Representatives Ritter and Perillo, 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 **H.B. 5048, AA Requiring Certificate of Need Approval for the Termination of Inpatient and Outpatient Services by a Hospital**.

H.B. 5048 would restore power to the Office of Health Care Access (OCHA) to require approval of the termination of essential health services. This power was eliminated when OCHA was merged into the Department of Public Health during the last legislative session. Now, hospitals only have to provide notice to OCHA.

The Certificate of Need (CON) process ensured that if a hospital planned to eliminate services, it would have to notify the State and public, and hold a public hearing to get the public's reaction. Without the CON process there is no reliable mechanism to ensure that a hospital's plan to eliminate a service will be vetted or made known to anyone in the community. This means that interested members of the public no longer have recourse through public hearings to comment on the proposal. It also means that patient access to healthcare is not monitored by the State.

In the past decade, PCSW used the CON process three times to work toward a resolution when women's health services were threatened by a proposed change in hospital practices: 2007: Hospital of Saint Raphael, New Haven, 2005: Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, New London, 2001: Sharon Hospital, Sharon. In each of these instances, health care services were preserved, or a compromise was made between the community and hospitals to ensure that adequate services were provided elsewhere. Restoring oversight to OCHA would

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ensure that the process is open and accessible to the public.

We look forward to working with you to address this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.