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**Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Public Health Committee
March 2, 2011**

Re: H.B. 6481, AAC The Establishment of a Lupus Education and Awareness Plan

Senators Stillman and Welch, Representatives Ritter and Perrillo, 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). PCSW is particularly concerned about gender, racial, and ethnic diversity in health care because there is a clear racial and ethnic disparity as African-American and Hispanic women are at a greater risk for certain diseases than White women. The extent of the problem with Asian populations is unknown due to lack of sufficient data. The above referenced bill would directly impact gender health disparities.

H.B. 6481, AAC The Establishment of a Lupus Education and Awareness Plan

PCSW also recommends passage of H.B. 6481, which would establish an Interagency and Partnership Advisory Panel to raise awareness about lupus. This bill could impact the 17,000 people in CT who have lupus.¹ The vast majority of people with lupus are women – 90% of all individuals diagnosed with lupus are women and people of color.² African-American women are impacted by lupus at an earlier age, experience greater disease severity, have the highest overall death rates among all people with lupus and are three times more likely to die from lupus than their White counterparts.³

Public awareness is needed because most people do not realize they have a potentially disabling disease because symptoms, such as fatigue, skin rashes, joint pain and hair loss mimic other conditions, and are dismissed as a minor health condition. PCSW looks forward to working on this initiative.

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

¹ Lupus Foundation of America, Connecticut Chapter. *Talking Points*, January 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.