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**Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Judiciary Committee
March 19, 2012**

Re: H.B. 5509, AAC The Payment of Alimony and Child Support

Senators Coleman and Kissel, Representative Fox and Hetherington, 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) regarding the above referenced bill.

H.B. 5509 would restrict the duration of alimony, and severely limit the grounds for which the Court could deviate from the law. PCSW opposes passage of this bill because it does not take into consideration each family's finances, circumstances, and the trade-offs that were made when the marriage was successful, i.e. one spouse remaining out of the workforce to care for the children. It also provides the obligor with additional mechanisms to control the ex-spouse's household after divorce.

The median earnings for divorced women is 87% less than married men at \$38,046 for women and \$43,621 for men.¹ In addition to pay inequity, women have less income because they are the primary caretakers in the family. Women are more likely to have taken time off or work or worked part-time to care for the family's children. Men continue to increase their income because their spouses are caring for their children while they work.

In divorce this income disparity continues because women still have to take time out of the workforce to care for the children, but now they have less income. Child support only pays a fraction of the expenses needed to provide a household for a child, and it doesn't calculate extra expenses such as extracurricular and school activities.

Passage of this bill will result in custodial parents, which are mostly women, continuing to bear the brunt of the financial responsibility for the parties' children. We appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you on this issue.

¹ Maniko Chang, Ph.D. *Shortchanged: Why Women Have Less Wealth and What Can Be Done About It*, 2010.
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