Testimony for Appropriations Committee re: PCSW Budget 2/19/2013

19 February 2013

Dear Governor Malloy:

It would be a grievous mistake on the part of your administration to undermine the powerful service provided to the 1,435,664 women in our state by The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women by consolidating the legislative commissions. As a voter, as a Democrat, and as a strong as well as public supporter of your platform, I am discouraged by your willingness to dismantle over 40 years of proven, practical achievement embodied by the PCSW. I voted for you and your team because I was certain I could count on your support for precisely these kinds of programs and commissions, believing that your commitment to gender equity was as strong as the women who worked hard for your election. I hope you won't prove me wrong. Please do not make me wish that CT had elected a woman governor.

Why is The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women necessary? Because, according to statistics compiled for 2011 by the National Women's Law Center, the typical woman who has received an associate's degree still isn't paid as much as the typical man who only graduated from high school. More specifically, according to Census statistics released September 12, 2012 based on the median earnings of all full-time, year-round workers, men's earning in 2011 were $48,202 and women's were $37,118. That's a difference of $11,084. In 2011, the earnings of African American women were $33,501, 69.5 percent of all men's earnings, while Latinas' earnings were $29,020, 60.2 percent of all men's earnings.

Women need a visible and viable outlet to let us know where we can turn when we need information and assistance, not only when we hit the glass ceiling but when we hit any kind of institutional wall. Women, for hundreds of years have said "This has got to change. Somebody has to do something about this. But what can I do? I'm only one person." We all have our own version of a significant issue that's too overwhelming, too enormous, too intimidating, and apparently too far away from our own sphere of influence to do anything except break our hearts or make us furious and frustrated. Every woman has a "this" keeping her up at night: the rights for girls to be educated; violence against those who can least protect themselves; the systematic exploitation of those who can least make their own case; the plight of abused girls and women. We wring our hands and break our hearts, believing ourselves powerless. The PCSW has changed that. It removes the word "only": it has turned the phrase "I'm one person" into a battle cry and, dare I say, a vote of encouragement. It reaffirms during the toughest of times that a woman is fully a citizen and a person of conviction and courage who has a voice, a vote, and a group backing them up.

Do not undermine, dismantle, and wreck the work of 40 years, Governor Malloy. Keep the PCSW intact.

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