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My name is Susan Lewin. I am a resident of Orange, a trained epidemiologist and an active member of my community. I also serve as the Chair of The Community Fund for Women & Girls, a component fund of The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. Our fund, a permanent endowment, promotes the social and economic advancement of women and girls in 20 cities and towns in Southern Connecticut. Our geographic footprint includes over 300,000 women and girls and our network of supporters includes 4,000 donors, 75 volunteers and over 100 nonprofit organizations with whom we partner. We also work collaboratively with twelve other women's funds across the state and we rely heavily on the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to provide us with data, inform us on current policy matters, monitor legislation and provide guidance and counsel on viewing contemporary issues with a gender lens. We stand with the PCSW in seeking a community where gender parity is second nature – not merely an add-on or after thought.

The Fund for Women and Girls of New Haven promotes the social and economic advancement of women and girls in Southern Connecticut and for over 10 years has relied on the data and recommendations of the PCSW to aid us in investing our funds strategically in those issues that most impact the women and girls of our area - economic security, violence prevention, health and political participation. We have been able to have a positive social and financial impact on The Greater New Haven community as a result.

Just one example of our impact is our longstanding investment in an organization called All Our Kin. All Our Kin supports the establishment of women business owners, increases the availability

of quality childcare and consequently, their parents are able to work. The far-reaching impact of All Our Kin is delineated in the 2011 report on the Economic Impact of the All Our Kin Family Childcare Tool Kit Licensing Program by the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis at the University of Connecticut. Aside from the positive impact on the lives of graduates of the program, the children who participate in the program and the mothers who now have quality childcare options, the program has created $18.4 million in additional tax revenue between 2006 and 2009. It is further projected that between 2010 and 2016 it will create $17 million per year in additional tax revenue. The Fund's nearly $40,000 investment in All Our Kin is directly linked to the compelling work of the PCSW. The research, knowledge and expert counsel provided by the PCSW helps to create the parameters by which grants are awarded. According to the CT Center for Economic Analysis study, our partnership with the PCSW and All Our Kin has resulted in as much as $40 milliion in additional tax revenue to the state of CT.

It would seem the $600,000 invested in the PCSW is one of the States better investments. I would ask you to seriously consider whether the financial benefit to the State budget gained by this consolidation will outweigh the potential loss of new initiatives benefiting the States bottom line as result of the PSCW's work.

In addition, gender equity has not yet been achieved. Whether that is in the wage gap between men and women, political parity or other measures. Our own legislature reflects this gap. Less than 30% of our legislators are women, women make up less than 20% of cabinet level positions within the executive branch. Until such time as our governing bodies are representative of our population there will be a need for the PCSW to be our advocate. Since 1973 the women of CT irrespective of their ethnic or socioeconomic basis have been able to rely on the PCSW to ensure the gender lens is applied to their challenges and opportunities. Who will ensure our voice is heard if the PCSW is no longer present at the legislative table to inform, craft and track outcomes of state policy? We at the Fund for Women and Girls are dependent on the PCSW for reliable research and analysis on the issues affecting the status of women and girls and as our liaison with the government. The data provided by the PCSW has informed our own "Status of Women and Girls in New Haven" report,

published in 2012, which provides us with baseline information on the City of New Haven and clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the four core issues and their impact on the women and girls of our area.

I am here to ask you to reconsider the proposed consolidation of the legislative commissions, effectively merging the Permanent Commission of the Status of Women with the commissions on children, Asian Pacific-Americans, Latinos and Puerto Ricans and African-Americans. The issues facing the different commissions are not the same and the proposed consolidation will not serve the best interests of any of the populations affected. One size does not fit all.

Returning to the old status quo is not acceptable. Many are shocked when they realize it was only 15 short years ago when medical research started, yes started, factoring gender into research. It was only 15 years ago that we began to recognize that perhaps different biology required different testing, different treatment protocols and different medicine. Women's Health Research at Yale has done tremendous work to change how science is conducted, to encourage and fund research that includes gender as a variable. Considering that some of the health mandates we now take for granted, and have great pride in being the home of include the Family Medical Leave Act and the elimination of drive-by mastectomies. These milestones are directly linked to the work of the PCSW. Health Equity, Human Trafficking, Self Sufficiency Standards – this is all the work of the PCSW – on behalf of ALL women of our state.

In summary the effective elimination of the PCSW as a separate commission is a retrograde step turning the clock back 40 years. It is a false economy. Improving the status of women improves not only their lives but those of their families and the community. In no other way can the same positive, systemic and sustaining impact be achieved as through women.