

February 19, 2013

Dear Appropriations Committee,

I am writing in lieu of public testimony, as I am unable to attend the public hearing concerning the future of The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. In my role as a partner in a women-owned small business, I have had the opportunity to witness the work of the PCSW over the past 8 years. I am strongly committed to improving the opportunities for women to succeed in business in Connecticut, I spent several years in a leadership role in MERG (Micro Enterprise Resource Group), and have been active in several business organizations, including the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce. I currently serve on the steering committee for the Women's Business Alliance, a council in the Middlesex Chamber of Commerce focused on women in business. Working full-time in a small business means I wear many hats and constantly need to stay up-to-date on many things in technology, my industry, community, etc. I rely on the PCSW to review upcoming bills, fight for my rights in the legislature, continue the battle for equal pay for equal work, and provide training to stop sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. I do not personally have the time to research these bills and testify when necessary, I am thankful that a bipartisan PERMANENT commission on the status of women was established to work for me.

Despite their hard work for over 35 years, women still make only \$.81 on the \$1.00 for doing the same work with the same skills as a man. More women are completing college degrees than ever before, but their work is not done until we can tell our daughters that they can expect to be paid the same as a man when they have the same experience and education. I just read a recent survey that determined women only achieve equal pay in ONE industry (Pharmacy). This is just not an acceptable standard.

In order for women to become equal contributors to our government, we need to have equal representation. PCSW has worked towards ensuring that appointments to various boards and commissions are filled by qualified women, not an easy task in an area that has been historically dominated by men.

There is still a need for education to end sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Connecticut has made great gains, but we are not there yet. This is only a small portion of what the PCSW provides. They have initiated many programs to help women get back to work after a hiatus, learn a new trade, inspire young women to set high goals for themselves in education and employment.

In recent years, they have been downsized in staff, diligently continuing their mandate, despite declining budgets. If the PCSW is combined with other commissions, how can we expect there to be enough staff to continue all the programs, review bills, assess what bills will have a negative impact on women, and organize information and testimony so that our legislature will better understand these issues? Just as I rely on them to inform me, the legislature has come to rely on them to do the hard work of understanding women's issues and presenting the facts. I also rely on PCSW to hold our General Assembly accountable to the female citizens of this state.

Please consider the long history of the PCSW serving Connecticut's women, over half our population. There was a reason it was established as a PERMANENT commission, so the work would not be temporary, but continues to serve each new generation of female citizens. Consider the disservice that combining this commission with many others would be to the 1,435,664 adult women in Connecticut.

Respectfully,

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