

## **Joelle Fishman**

17 Hobart Street, New Haven Connecticut 06511  
(203) 430-2334 joelle.fishman@pobox.com

### **Testimony to the Appropriations Committee February 19, 2013**

#### **In Support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and for Maintaining Separate Legislative Commissions**

Good evening Sen. Harp, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

I am testifying in opposition to the merger of legislative commissions as proposed in the Governor's budget. Such an action may seem "penny-wise," but would prove to be "pound-foolish."

When the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was established 40 years ago, I remember how proud I was of our state as we broke new ground nationally. As a woman leader in Connecticut, I look forward each month to the contributions that this Commission makes.

It has been said that as women rise, we bring everyone with us. The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women has served as a North Star for girls and women in Connecticut all these years. It provides the Legislature with necessary economic and social data and offers opportunities and encouragement to women and girls for civic engagement, enriching our quality of life.

When President Barack Obama, in the State of the Union message, called on Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, he acknowledged there is a long way to go to achieve equal rights for women in our country. The lack of equal rights hurts our economy, our children and our entire society.

By studying and raising public awareness of the status of women and girls in our state, the Commission makes a vital contribution toward the ability of lawmakers and policy makers to identify and address inequities and project forward.

I want to especially express my deepest appreciation for the leadership that Teresa Younger has provided to the Commission and to Connecticut in her capacity as Executive Director. The Stand for Women rally, Women's Day at the Capitol and consistent community outreach are not easy. It is to the credit of the Commission that hundreds of women have been inspired to assist in a volunteer capacity, which is only made possible by the outstanding Commission staff.

As well, I believe it would be a setback for our state to merge the commissions on children, Asian-Americans, Latinos and African-Americans and to eliminate the Commission on Aging. The focused attention that staff can provide in each of these areas on behalf of the populations they represent has assisted our legislative bodies in addressing discrimination and inequities and thereby addressing the needs of the entire state.

I can say from experience formerly with the Coalition to End Child Poverty in Connecticut, and now with the Connecticut Alliance for Retired Americans, that focused attention and staffing by the Commission on Children and the Commission on Aging have pushed Connecticut forward for the needs of children and seniors.

Let our state continue to be a leader. Even in difficult times, our state with its contrasting great wealth and deep poverty can find the revenue to allow the invaluable work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the others to guide us to higher ground.