TO: Appropriations Committee. Connecticut General Assembly
FROM: Caroline Sloat, 318 Thompson Road, Thompson, CT 06277
RE: Support for retaining PCSW as an independent commission
DATE: February 19, 2013

I write in support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) and request that no change be made to its status as an independent commission. I am unable to attend the session for the receipt of public testimony on the Governor's recommendations for the PCSW budget on February 19, but wish to go on record in support of PCSW as currently constituted.

I understand that the proposed state budget attempts to address the dire condition of the state's finances by recommending the consolidation of a group of state commissions.

Who in Connecticut will be better served through consolidation? Certainly not the women of the state who benefit from this unique and highly skilled public policy commission. We can rely on PCSW to be on watch in Connecticut's legislature on issues that are critical to women and for women. Recently, PCSW has spoken up with respect to Executive Branch hiring practices (ConnGAP); promotion and training within the state police (Department of Public Safety) and sexual harassment of female employees in the Department of Corrections. The inclusion of women in each of these departments in jobs that are safe and offer a career ladder would seem like a no-brainer in our state and yet, PCSW was compelled to speak out in order to keep the playing field level and fair for Connecticut's working women.

It is not just wrong, it is discriminatory to assume that the issues of women are the same as the issues of African-Americans, Latinos, children, and those identifying as LGBT or that the remedies are the same. In the current national climate women's reproductive issues are being held hostage to other interests; in Connecticut, hospital mergers are shaping up as a subtle way to move our state in the same backward direction. PCSW is monitoring this issue, keeping our legislators informed, and speaking out.

PCSW is a public policy agency. It does its research and legislative monitoring on a shoestring. Its annual allotment, $504,394, does not even approach 1 percent of the State's budget. That is approximately 35 cents for each of Connecticut's 1,435,664 women over the age of 18—women who work, pay taxes, and vote in Connecticut.

The proposed merger is a distraction to the critical work currently being undertaken by PCSW staff and I urge you to reconsider this discriminatory approach to rectifying the state's budget problems.