



**Wider
Opportunities
for Women**

February 19, 2013

Senator Toni Harp and Rob Kane
Representatives Toni Walker and Craig Miner
Joint Committee on Appropriations
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) submits this letter of support for the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). PCSW is valuable, effective and dynamic, and well-represents the concerns of Connecticut women and the thousands of families they support. Throughout its 40-year history, PCSW has repeatedly proven its capacity for data-driven advocacy, supporting the work of state policymakers, building public awareness of economic security issues, and promoting equal health care access.

WOW encourages Connecticut lawmakers and the Appropriations Committee to maintain full and independent funding for PCSW and enable it to provide a unique and effective voice to the state's women, workers, vulnerable families and seniors. We respect and understand the challenges this Committee faces in confronting the state budget. We believe, however, that reorganization or defunding of PCSW will prove a shortsighted error, and cost the State an important resource in your work to achieve economic security and equality of all Connecticut citizens. WOW knows from nearly 50 years of research and advocacy experience that the financial and rights challenges faced by women—particularly single parents and seniors—are distinct, and require the attention of a government which thinks and acts on their challenges every day.

It has been WOW's honor to work in partnership with PCSW for many years. WOW and PCSW have collaborated to produce, promote and use unique measures of economic security and community stability. PCSW has not just been a strong voice in Connecticut; it has long been a national leader and innovator, a source of good reputation and pride for Connecticut.

Last year, PCSW released the Basic Economic Security Tables™ Index for Connecticut, which measures the cost of living for over 400 different family types in the state's towns and counties. The Index and its corresponding report provide valuable analyses of the economic insecurity of Connecticut families and are effective resources to every policymaker, change-maker and citizen in the state. This is an example of innovation that PCSW can continue to transform into meaningful change.

PCSW carries out its work with great passion and expertise. It has testified on over 75 bills before Connecticut legislators. It provides no-cost training to all state employees on sexual harassment and gender discrimination. It partners with individuals and organizations across the state to provide training services, including a young women's leadership program, anti-discrimination and sexual harassment prevention. It presents on its work to hundreds of partner organizations across the state. It works to ensure pay equity and political parity for women. This work and the prospect of achieving these goals in Connecticut are compromised without the leadership of PCSW.

Women, their families, and seniors still face significant challenges in Connecticut. Women in Connecticut still earn just \$.78 for every dollar earned by their male counterpart. The majority of Connecticut residents below the federal poverty level are women. Women are much more likely to work in low wage jobs (in health care, retail, hospitality) that offer incomes far less than what they need for economic insecurity. And Connecticut ranks fifth in the country for the largest gap between the median income of the state's seniors and the incomes they need for



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true economic security, according to the Elder Economic Security Standard Index research issued by PCSW and WOW. Preserving the funding and integrity of the PCSW is important in addressing these issues. It is important to the state and to its leadership that the women of Connecticut know that the state will continue to work for them.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women represents and manifests the highest ideals of democratic society. And funding for the PCSW, which equals a modest \$.35 for every Connecticut woman over the age of 18, is a smart and sensible investment on behalf of Connecticut families.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about our work with PCSW, please contact us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn McMahon".

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