Testimony in Opposition of Merging PCSW with other Commissions.

Over my 30 years of working in economic development in Connecticut, I have had the privilege of collaborating on a number of projects with PCSW. They not only have addressed women's issues in general very effectively, but have worked tirelessly in the area of supporting women owned businesses. Women owned businesses have been the fastest growing component of business development in Connecticut and have added thousands of jobs, tax revenues and other economic benefits to the State. PCSW has played a vital role in keeping women owned businesses abreast of legislative initiatives, contributing directly to their overall awareness and involvement in their state government.

At the same time, access to reliable sources of data around women's issues is a challenge at best. PCSW has filled this gap efficiently and effectively. The availability of this data has allowed for solid strategic planning and the design of effective structures that grow our economy.

This is not an easy task and requires a constant focus on the topic, coupled with an indepth understanding of the issues. This cannot be maintained if the focus of the Commission is diminished and watered down with multiple other agendas.

While PCSW has constantly contributed dramatically to the overall health of the state, I cannot say this is true in regards to other Commissions. Merging PCSW with other commissions will lower their role to the same level of ineffectiveness of other Commissions. Why would we want to weaken one the strongest and most effective Commissions in this State? While I understand the value of merging different state entities, this should only be done if it also improves the efficiency in which we serve our constituents and grow our economy.

Mergers are designed to strengthen structures and services, not diminish or eliminate them. Should PCSW be merged, it will serve only one purpose. One that is very short sighted.To

save funds on the short term while reducing dramatically the effectiveness with which we serve Connecticut. The benefit of savings of the merger will be significantly overshadowed by the loss of revenues caused by their absence. To put in jeopardy one of the strongest and most impactful resources in this State would be a travesty. Or we could use the old standard words of wisdom, "If it is not broken, don't fix it". I highly recommend that PCSW be maintained as an independent Commission and that it be allowed to continue to make the significant contributions that it has consistently made in this State.

Donna Wertenbach
President and CEO
Community Economic Development Fund.