

Appropriations Committee Hearing 2/19/2013
Re: PCSW Budget

Thank you Madam Chair/Mr. Chairman. Good evening everyone, my name is Kiley Cappetta and I am a senior at Luralton Hall in Milford. I stand before you today as a true product of some of the efforts of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Through the Commission's partnership with the Women's Campaign School at Yale, I was able to participate as an intern in the School's week-long gender focused "campaign boot-camp" last summer. This experience was truly eye-opening for me in that I realized my own passion for policy work, specifically in the area of women's issues. Getting women geared up about the political process is one of the numerous goals of PCSW and I can say from a very personal stance that they're doing it each and every day.

Now, the question before this hearing today is whether or not to merge PCSW with the commissions on children, Asian-Americans, Latinos, and African-Americans. It is indisputable that each of these populations face very diverse issues and diminishing any of them would only be counterproductive. All, with the exception of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission, have a staff of 5 or less and still manage to produce outstanding results through research, political action, and public outreach. PCSW, in particular, is instituting real and visible change in order to improve the status of women. With a staff of only five people, PCSW works hard to push the issues that are important to Connecticut women. In 2011 alone, they provided 27 research briefs, monitored 109 bills, 32 of which they testified on, were represented on 18 coalitions, and hosted 6 events. In addition to their many state-wide research studies, they act as the Connecticut conduit to many national studies. If reduced to a consolidated commission, our understanding of women, children, Asian-Americans, Latinos, and African-Americans would be greatly curtailed in both Connecticut and the United States as a whole.

Moreover, I stand in opposition to this as a young woman. As a student at Luralton Hall, an all girls' school, I have found that my peers stigmatize gender issues. They have yet to understand the importance of issues such as protecting pregnant workers and ensuring the availability of mammograms for all women – both of which PCSW has promoted in the 40 years of its existence. In a recent poll I conducted in one of my Advanced Placement courses, all but one student didn't know that women often do not receive equal pay or that the average woman with an associate's degree still isn't paid as much as the average male with a high school degree. The adversity that women face is, unfortunately, very real and until the women of my generation learn to advocate for themselves, we need the force of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in its entirety.