



Mary J. Barneby
Chief Executive Officer

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The Honorable Toni Harp
The Honorable Rob Kane
The Honorable Toni Walker
The Honorable Craig Miner

The State House
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senators Harp and Kane and Representatives Walker and Miner,

As the CEO of the largest girl empowerment organization in the State, I am writing to ask you to use your influence to allow the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to remain an independent agency under the proposed budget. Girl Scouts of Connecticut has for the past 100 years served thousands upon thousands of girls and women volunteers in Connecticut by delivering our mission to build girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place. We presently serve 47,000 girls in grades K-12 and nearly 20,000 volunteers who are primarily adult women. Ironically, Girl Scouting has been on a mission to empower girls and women in the US longer than women's suffrage! We are proud of our national legacy—56 million Girl Scout alumnae in the US who are happier, more confident, community minded citizens as a result of their Girl Scouting experiences. *

While we continue to endeavor to deliver relevant programs that allow girls to grow into independent and strong citizens and leaders, we all know that is not enough. Our national organization has organized a campaign entitled "To Get Her There", which signifies Girl Scouting's commitment to partner with volunteers, community leaders, schools and faith based organizations, legislators, families and private funders to do everything possible to provide girls with the opportunities they need and deserve to become whatever they choose. It does "take a village" to get a girl to where she wants to be and it also takes policy to ensure that she is supported and protected on her journey. We all know that the challenges to our female youth are greater than ever- as they struggle with bullying and abuse, economic and social barriers to academic success,

negative body image, feeling less entitled to achievement, facing hiring biases in more male dominated industries, micro-inequities in the workplace and the persistent and egregious issue of lower pay for equal work, which just does not seem to go away.

We are well aware of the dire state of the State budget and yet, as one who cares deeply for the nearly 65,000 girl and women constituents in this State who are part of Girl Scouting, I strongly object to the notion that issues of women's equity are interchangeable with those of other groups that would be served in the proposed joint commission. That does a dis-service to all of the groups involved, each of which has different issues and work to address. For the past 40 years, the PCSW has been there to advocate for all of the wrong and even illegal practices that have been holding women back. Their fervent advocacy gives the 1.4 million plus women in this state a unified and persistent voice that will enable us to be safe and treated fairly so we, too, can have the opportunities we deserve as voters, taxpayers and concerned citizens to contribute to the economic and social well-being of the State. It is interesting that women are, in fact, a majority in this State, yet continue to be treated like a minority. We need the PCSW to be there to advocate for pay equity, fair treatment of women in the workforce, to fight trafficking, rape and spousal abuse, to end discriminatory medical insurance rates, to recognize that working mothers have more on their plate to handle than their spouses. We need the PCSW to be there to guide legislators with fact and information that will assist our legislators in making the right decisions and creating public policy that allows women to move forward as valued members of our community.

You all know that we have much more work to do to ensure the public safety of women who are not being protected by our laws and to create a State where every woman who wants to achieve has the same chances as her male counterparts. You have done this in a remarkable and bi-partisan way with education reform-- please let Connecticut also be the model for supporting its women citizens. Without the PCSW as a visible champion for women, you and I both know that employers will slide by with their unfair practices, families will suffer and our great State will lose because we have not protected and nurtured a valuable source of our talent.

As a champion for girls and women's empowerment, and a committed citizen of this State, I urge you to rethink the proposal to merge PCSW into a general agency. Without PCSW we will lose our beacon and champion for women and the impact will be far-reaching from now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary J. Barneby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mary J. Barneby

CEO- Girl Scouts of Connecticut

- Source GSUSA research study—the State of Girl Scout Alumnae in the US, 2011