February 19, 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Miner and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I submit this testimony in opposition to the initiative in Governor Malloy's budget proposal to merge the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women with other commissions. I feel that it is important to note that the mission of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is not the same as the missions of the other commissions.

The PCSW is charged to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions; and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination.

One of the most important roles that the PCSW has played has been to bring a high level of professionalism to the discussion of women in our state. They initiate studies that elucidate not only the issues, but offer solutions. They are a voice for women, not only through the data that they gather, compile and distribute, they are a voice for at the table, sometimes the only voice.

It was the PCSW that worked diligently to ensure that all women in the Waterbury area did not lose access to health services. It was the PCSW that compiled data on the discrepancies in the salaries of men and women in CT doing the same job. As you know the governor has responded, recently calling for more action on this issue. The PCSW has been working on issues like Human Trafficking for years, an issue which is receiving quite a bit of attention this session. Proponents have benefitted from the work the PCSW has already done.

In essence, the PCSW has been the foremost authority in the state when it comes to issues regarding women and families. I know that when I served on the Appropriations Committee, I often turned to the expertise of the PCSW. I will also note that the PCSW has been a partner with the Appropriations Committee at all times with regard to Results Based Accountability. They have embraced how important it is to show results and have consistently shown how important their work is to the women of this state.

The Women of Connecticut deserve to have a strong voice through the PCSW. I hope you will not take that voice away or mute it by stripping it of the resources it needs to do such important work.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

Sincerely,
Deb Heinrich, PhD
Madison, CT