February 19, 2013

Connecticut General Assembly, Appropriations Committee
Senators Toni N. Harp and Robert J. Kane, Representatives Toni E. Walker and Craig A. Miner
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continuation of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) as a separate agency in our state, and to express strong opposition to the proposal that would merge this commission with other legislative commissions.

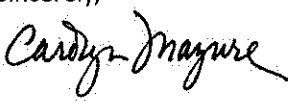
I offer my opinions as a private citizen and Connecticut resident, having a three decade professional career in health research with a specialty in women's health and a longstanding affiliation with Yale University School of Medicine. I have had direct personal experience with the Commission for many years and know the Commission to be an essential agent in appropriately representing the status and position of women in Connecticut. Both the focus and the scope of the work that must be regularly accomplished by the Commission require a dedicated agency that collaborates effectively with other state, as well as public and private, entities. The Commission does just that, and it does so efficiently and with great expertise.

As someone whose career is dedicated to advancing the health of women, I can testify that there is a dramatic need for an agency with a specific focus on women. As a group, women historically have been understudied, under-resourced and under-represented. The PCSW recognizes this, and does an outstanding job of ensuring that the needs of many different groups of women - those of different ages, racial/ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic positions, health statuses, and personal experiences - in the state are identified and included in the legislative agenda of the state.

With specific regard to the health of women - especially now, as new health laws are being written and implemented, and health care systems and allotment of care are rapidly evolving, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is particularly needed as a separate, independent voice to ensure that public policy advances the well-being of women who are both the greatest utilizers of the health care system and make the majority of health care decisions for their husbands, partners and families.

Making positive change through public policy requires sustained effort from a dedicated entity. The PCSW must be permitted to continue to monitor the lives of women in the state and advocate for crucial issues affecting women. The Commission serves a much-needed watchdog role on issues critical to women, and I am seriously concerned that the Commission's informed data, legislative bill monitoring, and policy recommendations on improving the status of women will be very significantly diluted or even entirely lost in the proposed merger. Thus, I ask you to maintain the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women as a separate commission. Women in Connecticut need and deserve the continuation of this agency as a separate, independent monitor.

Sincerely,



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