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*Testimony in SUPPORT of the
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)*

Appropriations Committee – February 19, 2013

My name is Cassandra Parkman, and I live at 411 Main Street in Manchester. I hold an Associate's Degree in Human Services, and I am a member of the Human Services National Honor Society, Tau Upsilon Alpha, Alpha Sigma Chapter. I am here in front of you tonight to speak briefly of my opposition to the proposed consolidation of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), and all other Commissions, into one new generic "*Commission on Citizen Advocacy*."

I am a homecare worker. There are almost 7,000 other homecare workers providing state services – almost all women, almost all low-paid and without benefits. With their research and advocacy, the PCSW helped to shine a light on the economic disparity in this kind of "women's work" and helped to bring us out of the shadows. When I first came to the State Capitol last year to lobby for a bill to improve homecare jobs, it was exciting to discover there is an organization dedicated to making sure Connecticut is always striving for economic equality for women.

As a woman and as someone who has studied what advocacy and human services are all about, I fail to see how this proposed consolidation would be in the best interest of the people. But what I can see are the social implications this would have.

This consolidation of commissions suggests that different cultural groups (women, children, Asian-Americans, Latinos, African-Americans, and gays, lesbians, and transgendered persons) can essentially be lumped together and receive the same level of effective advocacy. This is not true. I can tell you that, as a woman, my issues are not the same as those of a child, an Asian-American, a Latino, an African-American, or a gay/lesbian person — and vice-versa.

This is an issue of a lack of multi-cultural competence. The failure to understand that consolidating the different commissions is a failure to act in the greatest good for the greatest number of people of this state.

I and all women, who make up about 51% of the total number of people in this state, deserve to have our voices heard in State Capitol when there is an issue of equality and women's rights. I strongly feel this can only be accomplished through a commission that focuses solely on women's issues.