45 Stratton Drive
Cheshire, CT 06410-3140
February 12, 2013

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senators Harp and Kane and Representatives Walker and Miner:

RE: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women ("PCSW")

With all due respect and as a reminder: **Per-ma-nent**: adjective: **Existing perpetually; everlasting, especially without significant change**. Existing or intended to exist for an indefinite period. Not expected to change for an indefinite time; **not temporary.**

The PERMANENT Commission on the Status of Women: In 1973 recognizing that women had not achieved equality, established the PCSW to identify issues affecting the status of women and to provide leadership and information to policy-makers, the business community, non-profits, the media and the public. Since then, some progress has been made, but much work remains. BY STATE STATUTE, the PCSW holds state Government accountable.

Women are the only majority, making up 51% of the population that are consistently treated as a minority. That, in and of itself, should be substantial enough for the PCSW to exist – PERMANENTLY, or, at least until women have **fully achieved parity**.

The PCSW is a non-partisan agency, working with legislators of all affiliations to inform them on matters specific to women, provide research and holds the State of Connecticut accountable for policies and practices that are discriminatory to women or which do not advance the status of women in such areas as government, education, the workplace, and in terms of access to healthcare.

The PCSW has undergone significant changes in the past several years, has cut staff and is working with reduced resources beyond what is reasonable and, yet, they continue to be effective. Folding this force into a combined agency to include African Americans, the Latino population, children and LGBT individuals dilutes the State's commitment, not only to women, but also to African Americans, the Latino population, children and LGBT individuals, all of whom have unique need and none of whom will be served in any meaningful way by a fractured Commission.

One only needs to reflect back on the 2012 political campaign season when Congressional leaders and presidential candidates made statements such as "legitimate rape", "binders full of women" and that pregnancies that result from rape are "intended by God" which can, at best, be considered as ignorant and uninformed to realize that the PCSW is needed not only in Connecticut, but across our nation to set the records straight and continue to provide leadership and advocate for women.

The proposed merger to the Commission on Citizen Advocacy will, most likely, become the Commission on Marginalized Populations, serving no one and truly **wasting taxpayer's dollars**. **Investing** $0.35 per woman through the work, outreach, advocacy and impact of the PCSW is clearly the way to go.

Sincerely,

Helene Astorino Robbins
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Cheshire, CT 06410-3140