



Testimony
Supporting the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
and the Other Legislative Commissions
Appropriations Committee
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Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut is a strong supporter of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) and the other legislative commissions that protect the rights of those who face discrimination. PCSW, the Commission on Children and the Asian-Pacific American Affairs, African-American Affairs and Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs commissions provide an independent voice for those who lack the power to stand up against vested interests. The Commission on Children and the Commission on Aging speak up for people who often lack the ability to speak for themselves. We oppose the Governor's budget proposal to eliminate the Commission on Aging and to consolidate the rest of these groups into one Commission on Citizen Advocacy.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut is an independent non-profit foundation dedicated to achieving access to high quality, affordable health care for everyone in our state. PCSW is an important partner in our work. Health access and security is one of PCSW's top priority areas. Women face significant challenges in the health care arena. In addition to having distinct health care needs such as reproductive health, they are more prone than men to have chronic conditions requiring ongoing treatment. Women are also overwhelmingly the caregivers for elders and children with health problems or disabilities. As reported by the National Women's Law Center, women are more likely to need and use health services, but on average have lower incomes than men. Women with insurance face higher out-of-pocket costs than men as a share of their income. They also have less access to employer-sponsored insurance and are more likely to rely on government health care programs. In representing the specific health concerns of women, PCSW serves a crucial function in moving Connecticut's health agenda forward.

Their work on economic and financial security is equally important. In 2012 PCSW sponsored crucial research on what income levels are needed to support basic family economic security in Connecticut. The Basic Economic Security Tables (BEST) report shows wage requirements as well as the cost of housing, utilities, transportation and other key services by family size and region. The fact that three quarters of single parent households are headed by women and many of these families live below the federal poverty line served as a major impetus for this research.

Combining the various commissions will only dilute the power of each to focus on the needs of their particular constituency. Discrimination against women, African Americans or Latinos does not manifest in the same way, and remedies are not always the same. The legislative commissions fulfill vital functions as policy researchers, independent watchdogs and advocates. They serve to hold government accountable and make sure it serves the needs of all of Connecticut's residents, not just those with the power to hire high-priced lobbyists to represent their interests. Consolidating these agencies will only weaken their ability to protect consumers and is not worth the minor cost savings presented in the Governor's budget. Please continue to fund PCSW and the other commissions as separate entities.