



WBDC

Women's Business Development Council

*The Leader of
Entrepreneurial and
Financial Training for
Women in Connecticut*

February, 14 2013

Toni E. Walker
Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Representative Walker:

I am writing to you to strongly urge you and your colleagues in the Connecticut State Legislature to preserve the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) in its current form rather than trivializing its history and accomplishments for the past 40 years. Let us set an example for the rest of the county and the world as a committed leader to women's issues. Politics and \$504,000 should not get in the way.

I have witnessed the importance and impact of the PCSW for more than 20 years as a resident of Connecticut and have worked with the PCSW as a partner for women's economic equality for nearly 16 years. The PCSW is one of Connecticut's best kept secrets, and one of the premier women's public policy commissions in the country.

For 40 years, the PCSW has been the voice of women in Connecticut and I strongly oppose the merger of this commission with other legislative commissions to create a single agency. The PCSW is a watchdog on issues critical to and for women. By State statute they hold State government accountable. Accountability based on a Check-and-balance system is critical to government integrity. With this system PCSW analyzes how states policies affect or do not affect women and families.

By merging PCSW with other legislative commissions a false assumption is being made that all minority voices are the same. This simply is not true, women are the only majority (51% of population) that are consistently treated as a minority. It is discriminatory and narrow-minded to assume the issues of women, blacks, Latinos, children and LGBT people are the same, or that discrimination against these groups manifests in the same ways, or that the remedies are the same. For example, reproductive rights are uniquely female and medical insurance rates discriminate by gender.

It must be recognized that when it comes to public policy, changes take time. PCSW is a public policy agency, not a direct service organization. This commission studies the effects of gender discrimination over time. An excellent example of this is how the pay gap robs women of financial security in old age, less Social Security, and fewer assets. Enlightened public policy needs informed data, bill monitoring, and recommendations now for future solvency and the well-being of this population.

The proposed merger is a distraction to the critical work and decisions that need to get done and made. The PCSW's annual allotment of \$504,394 is far less than 1% of the State's

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budget (.0000265%). That is approximately 35 cents for each of Connecticut's 1,435,664 women over the age of 18. This doesn't include the next generation of women who will work, pay taxes, raise families and vote in Connecticut. If this merger occurs it will be an injustice for women in Connecticut and nationwide and I have to ask who is served well by this consolidation? Women's issues cannot be continually devalued and looked at as interchangeable with those of other groups.

I urge you and your colleagues not to marginalize women in the state of Connecticut. Rather, let us be a beacon and lead by example. What was established as a permanent commission for more than 51% of this state's population must remain so.

Sincerely,

Fran Pastore
President & CEO of the Women's Business Development Council