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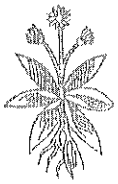

ALL OUR KIN INC.

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

Testimony Offered by All Our Kin, Inc.
February 19, 2013

Senator Harp, Senator Boucher, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Hello, my name is Jessica Sager. I am the executive director of All Our Kin, a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through our programs, child care professionals succeed as business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children, the workforce of tomorrow, gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond.

I am here this evening to urge you to preserve the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women as a stand-alone entity focused specifically on women's issues.

Women play a key role as leaders across our state. As we see daily at All Our Kin, women play an especially significant role in low-income areas, where they are powerful resources for their neighborhoods and communities. The job of caring for and educating our children often falls on women, be they informal caregivers, licensed child care providers, or a child's mother, grandmother, or family member. Thus, the well-being of women--financial, emotional, mental, and physical--directly impacts the conditions in which our state's children live and grow. If we enable women to thrive by ensuring they have equal opportunity to earn meaningful wages, access to necessary health services, and are not subject to discrimination, then we also support children and, in turn, the future of our state.

Despite the many ways in which women are active in society-- as workers, mothers, caregivers, leaders-- women remain tragically undervalued. To quote the PCSW, "women are the only majority (51% of population) consistently treated as a minority." All Our Kin emerged as an organization from the realization that working, single mothers were doubly burdened with marginalization in the workforce and finding safe, quality child care that they could afford. We also found, and continue to find, that the difficult work of caring for children-- as a licensed provider and as an informal caregiver-- is not valued, supported, or compensated as it needs to be. This reality is alarming. If a woman is denied the health care she needs, or cannot obtain a job with adequate wages, or cannot keep a job because of insufficient child care options, it is not only she who is disenfranchised, but also the children in her care who will lack the strong foundation they need for a lifetime of success.

At All Our Kin, we work to ensure that women's caregiving work is visible and valued; that mothers have viable, safe, quality child care options; and that child care providers receive the support that they need in order to provide quality care to children. But we cannot do this alone. By focusing on the three priority areas of economic and financial security, health and safety, and the elimination of gender discrimination, the PCSW plays a critical role in ensuring that all Connecticut's women and girls are poised to succeed.

I fully understand that these are dire financial times for Connecticut, and that your task on the Appropriations Committee is a challenging one. However I urge you to bear in mind that The PCSW's annual allotment of $504,394 is far less than 1% of the State's budget. Discontinuing funding for the PCSW, which is far less than 1% of the state's budget, would *not* solve the budget crisis, but *would* dismantle a group whose work is critical to the lives of the hundreds of women business owners All Our Kin supports, the working mothers of the children they care for, and the well-being of Connecticut as a whole.

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