Re-submitted for Appropriations Hearing 3/22/2013

CITIZENS FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
Corporate Responsibility Campaign

My name is Karen Schuessler and I am the Director of Citizens for Economic Opportunity (CEO). CEO is a coalition of community and labor groups addressing health care reform and corporate responsibility issues.

I strongly oppose Governor Malloy's proposal in the state budget that calls for consolidating the legislative commissions into a single agency to be called the Commission on Citizen Advocacy. This would severely harm the effectiveness of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Merging PCSW with the commissions on children, Asian-Americans, Latinos and African-Americans would be detrimental to women all across Connecticut who rely on the PCSW for their health and safety. The issues of women, blacks, children and Latinos are the not the same and they should remain their own separate entity in order to be effective.

The work of the PCSW is essential to women's health issues as they have worked tirelessly to ensure that all Connecticut women have access to mammograms and have provided initiatives that resulted in a bill to protect women from being fired because she becomes pregnant. In fact, they are the only government institution that studies and provides research on matters concerning women in Connecticut.

Citizens for Economic Opportunity has worked closely with the PCSW on issues regarding women not being charged more for health insurance because of their gender. I have seen first - hand how the PCSW is committed to the issue of gender discrimination and has helped countless women with issues such as sexual harassment, pay inequity, and the lack of promotional opportunities.

The work of the PCSW cannot be replaced. They must remain their own distinct agency so they can continue to be a watchdog on issues critical to women. Their non-partisan voice is crucial to analyze how state policies affect women and families.

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