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**Testimony of**  
**The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Before the**  
**Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee**  
**February 28, 2013**

**Re: S.B. 176, AA Establishing a Higher Education Performance Incentive Taskforce**  
**S.B. 868, AA Targeting State Financial Aid to Support Technical Training**

Senators Bye and Boucher, Representatives Willis and LeGeyst, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) regarding **S.B. 176, AA Establishing a Higher Education Performance Incentive Taskforce** and **S.B. 868, AA Targeting State Financial Aid to Support Technical Training**.

S.B. 176 would establish a taskforce to establish a higher education performance incentive program, and would consider STEM degrees. S.B. 868 would target financial aid to support technical training for higher education students, which would address a gap in the financial aid system by allowing individuals to enroll in short-term training programs and acquire skills to prepare for current job openings. PCSW supports both of these proposals because we believe they provide an opportunity for women to enter higher paying nontraditional jobs.

A non-traditional occupation for women is one in which women comprise 25% or less of total employment.<sup>1</sup> Non-traditional jobs tend to have established career ladders so women can work their way up to higher wages and higher benefits.<sup>2</sup> An area of non-traditional jobs is in the science, technology, engineering and math fields (STEM). Women are 24% of the STEM workforce. This percentage has not changed between 2000 and 2009.<sup>3</sup>

*Impact on CT Women*

In 2010, Connecticut women comprised 17% of engineering occupations, 29% of computer and math occupations and 49% of life, physical and social science occupations.<sup>4</sup> The gender wage gap is 14% in STEM

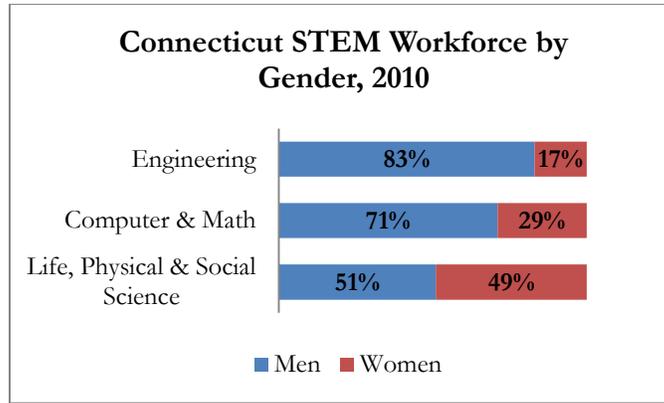
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. <<http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/nontra2007.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> Wider Opportunities for Women. *Women in the Trades Fact Sheet, 2005*.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce. *Women in STEM: A Gender Gap Innovation*, August 2011.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. *2010 American Community Survey, Occupation by Sex and Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over*.

jobs, compared to 21% in non-STEM jobs. This means that women with STEM jobs make 86 cents for every dollar that men make.<sup>5</sup>



An opportunity exists to make significant policy decisions to change the demographics of the non-traditional jobs workforce. Investments in pre-college programs incorporating hands-on activities, role models, and internships would increase women’s interest in and access to STEM careers. We look forward to working with you to address these important issues. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce. *Women in STEM: A Gender Gap Innovation*, August 2011.  
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