

**Written Testimony of  
Susan Eastwood, Commissioner, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
March 5, 2015**

**Testimony in Support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**

Senators Bye and Kane, Representatives Walker and Ziobron, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, and in opposition to cuts to their funding in the Governor's proposed budget.

My name is Susan Eastwood; I am a Commissioner on the Permanent Commission of the Status of Women. I live in Ashford and work as the Director of Communications and Outreach for the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut/ Clean Water Action.

I am strongly opposed to cuts in the budget for PCSW because I have seen firsthand the need for their work on behalf of women and families in Connecticut. I spent 25 years working to end domestic violence, including working as a victim advocate in the frontlines at Hartford Criminal Court. I have taught workshops for college age women in how to negotiate for equal pay in their first jobs and seen their faces when they realize that they stand to lose up to two million dollars in pay during their lifetimes due to the inequitable wages paid to women. I have raised money to fund doctoral research which allows more women to enter fields previously closed to us, or exposes middle-school girls to the possibilities of a career in math, science or government. I do this because I have been in all of these places myself and I don't want my daughter, grand-daughters and their generations of women to have to fight this battle.

But we are not there yet. Women are the only majority (51% of the population and 48.7% of the CT labor force) that has consistently been treated as a minority – wrongly, inequitably and as second class citizens. Women in the U.S. are paid only 77% of the wages a man earns for the same work. Minority women fare even worse, with African-American women earning 62 cents for every dollar earned by men and Latina women earning 55% of what a man makes. Women's rights to health care are in jeopardy even as we speak. One in four women will face domestic violence in their lifetimes. These conditions affect not only women, but every man and child who has a woman in their lives.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women plays a unique role in the fight for equal rights and justice for women. We are a policy group which was formed by legislative mandate 41 years ago, in recognition that women had not yet achieved equality. Connecticut's PCSW is the oldest such group in the nation. Our role is to advise the legislature on issues pertaining to

women. As a research and policy group, PCSW does not spend its time fighting the fight on the frontlines of court or clinic. We are the voice for women here, in government. This is a crucial role and will be so until women are truly equal. Considering that women currently comprise only about one third of this legislative body, this will be many years in coming!

Our work supports a woman's economic security, health and safety throughout her lifespan and helps eliminate gender-based discrimination. This important work should not be diluted by budget cuts. These cuts may jeopardize funding needed for the research that aids the legislature in its work to make progress on issues vital to families in Connecticut. It may cut the time staff can spend to answer the hundreds of questions they field each week from legislators and citizens, reduce the number of educational speakings and trainings they can participate in, or limit their ability to represent the voices of women on boards and commissions. The savings the state would achieve are not great but the loss to women would be huge. The PCSW staff has been cut in half already and the current budget is about 43 cents per adult woman in Connecticut (1,435,664 women over the age of 18). Aren't the women in your lives worth 43 cents a year?

A quick look at our list of accomplishments is enough to show what a dynamic and effective group this is. I strongly urge you to reject the proposed budget cuts to the Commission and allow the PCSW to continue its excellent work.

Thank you.