

**Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England**  
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**Appropriations Committee Public Hearing re Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget (HB 6824)**  
**and the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)**  
**March 5, 2015**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to express the support of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England for the programs, services and advocacy of our state's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Planned Parenthood is the state's largest provider of family planning and reproductive health care, serving over 65,000 women and men at 17 health centers across Connecticut.

Forty two years ago, the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was created by the General Assembly. For me, the PCSW is more than a state commission; it is where I started my professional journey 18 years ago, working at PCSW under a Non-Traditional Employment for Women Grant. Fresh out of UConn with my Women's Studies degree, I was ecstatic to work with the PCSW and to learn firsthand the important role it plays in closing the gap on gender inequality in our state.

When the PCSW was created women's rights were being addressed at every turn: Title IX was created in 1973, the year that also brought us the legalization of abortion. On March 15 of that year, our General Assembly ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, making Connecticut one of the 35 states declaring women to be equal.

This Sunday, March 8, is International Women's Day. It is timely that tonight we attest to the importance of the work and funding of our PCSW. Women advocate, organize and demonstrate in our own interests everywhere across the globe. Ultimately, however, we all need *government* that engages, responds, and delivers the policies that formally, legally and permanently affirm our status.

The statutory mandate of the PCSW is as inspiring as the era when it was created: "To insure that all women of the state are healthy, safe, achieve educational success, are economically self-sufficient, and free from discrimination. The PCSW was empowered to recommend to the General Assembly and Governor, policies and programs to foster progress in achieving these agreed-upon aims, which were described as *"quality of life desired results."*

Our small but effective PCSW has a legislative agenda that is ambitious and broadly focused on issues ranging from pay equity to occupational skills training; from funding for domestic violence programs to insuring access to comprehensive reproductive health care and education. It was the obvious state agency to convene, for example, last year's task force to study a family and medical leave insurance program that will, if adopted, have immeasurable value to the women who struggle to work while caring for both the young and old in their families.

The PCSW is Connecticut's thought-leader on economic security for women. The PCSW is a reliable voice addressing the culture of sexual violence on campus. The PCSW is a partner reviewing and speaking out when hospital mergers threaten diminish community-based reproductive health services.

The modest investment that Connecticut makes in the PCSW results in an agency that reaffirms our state's commitment to the perpetuation of policies that contribute to equal status, equal access and equal rights for all women. By funding the PCSW, you send a message: that Connecticut values women; that in Connecticut,

women must not only hold elected office, but must also serve in appointed positions in order to be consulted on policies that impact them. Connecticut attests to a belief in women's rights by funding a dedicated and PERMANENT agency *within government and at the same time empowered to speak the truth of women's lived experience*. This is a source of pride to those of us who have had the privilege of collaborating with and working for the PCSW over the years.

On behalf of myself and women across Connecticut we ask that you continue to provide the PCSW with the budgetary support necessary to continue its vital role woman. Thank you.