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PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

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**Testimony of
Christine Palm, Communications Director
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Government Administration and Elections Committee
February 25, 2015**

Re: H.B. 5793, AA Establishing Safe Haven Day

Senators Cassano and McLachlan, Representatives Jutila and Smith, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, my name is Christine Palm and I am the Communications Director for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 5793, AA Establishing Safe Haven Day.

H.B. 5793 would designate an annual day to raising awareness of Connecticut's Safe Haven Law. The PCSW supports efforts to make all citizens aware of this life-saving and effective piece of legislation, and we believe the profile of Safe Haven will be raised through an annual designation. I have the privilege of serving on the Safe Haven Working Group, co-chaired by Senators Osten and Bartolomeo, and Representatives Ziobron and Mulligan, along with the leadership of former Rep. Pam Sawyer, under whose aegis the committee began its important work.

When an infant is discarded, more than one life is lost. The safety, economic security and future of a woman who commits the desperate act of neonaticide are unnecessarily imperiled. So, in addition to directly saving the lives of at least 24 babies since its creation in 2000, the Safe Havens Law has saved that many young women – from jail time, from social isolation and from a life of self-recrimination. Young fathers, too, and in fact entire families, are devastated by this impulsive act which carries such long-term devastation. Safe Haven has helped them all.

As a commission mandated to work to enhance the safety and economic security of all women throughout the state, the PCSW strongly supports efforts to reach more women in this time of desperation, fear and confusion. Safe Haven is a law that works. It is both compassionate and practical: recognizing that not everyone who delivers – or fathers – a child is capable of caring for the baby.

I believe an annual day of recognition is far more than a symbolic gesture: it will help harness the power of both traditional and social media. And it costs nothing to designate an annual awareness day. What does cost – and dearly – is ignoring the plight of new mothers who do not know about this simple, life-saving law.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.