

Testimony of Catherine Ernsky
Before the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
Feb. 19, 2016

The PCSW is the voice of all Connecticut's women, and how their work touches women's lives is as varied as those lives themselves. Please allow me to share something from my own life.

My journey into motherhood began when I was just three weeks out of high school at a time when teenage pregnancy was not common. I worked three jobs while attending college and raising my son. I was blessed to have strong family support from my family's side and my husband's side. Though we did not marry until years later, we always worked as a team in the raising of our son and because of this we never needed to utilize state assistance. But twenty-seven years later, still married and having had another child, I am wholly aware that I am an exception in this narrative -- not the norm.

My journey was not an easy one. It was a constant struggle financially, physically and emotionally, as I worked my way up from the bottom in the financial services field. As both a woman and a Hispanic, I experienced my share of discrimination in this male-dominated field, which often valued a woman's looks more than her capabilities. So I responded the best way I knew how -- by starting my own business.

As a commissioner of the PCSW, I value the work our agency does in bringing to light gender discrimination wherever it occurs. I have been especially impressed by a recent study the agency did -- The Status of Women in the Workplace -- which revealed statistically what I knew intuitively: Latinas make just 46.6 cents of the white male dollar. And that even in high-paying fields like mine, women make far less than men (56.5% for financial managers).

In studies such as this, the PCSW helps contribute to enhance accountability and informed decision-making within the legislative body. They provide a voice that should not be silenced. Women are now the majority in the state, isn't it time we stop being treated as a minority?