

**COMMISSION OFFICERS**

Adrienne Farrar Houël, *Chair*  
Cecilia J. Woods, *Vice Chair*  
Denise Rodosevich, *Secretary*  
Elizabeth Donohue, *Treasurer*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Teresa C. Younger

**COMMISSIONERS**

Yvonne R. Davis  
Barbara DeBaptiste  
Carrie Gallagher  
Kristin LaFleur  
Tanya Meck  
Toni Moran  
Melanie O'Brien  
Jean L. Rexford  
Helene Shay  
Cindy R. Slane  
Susan O. Storey  
Patricia E.M. Whitcombe

**HONORARY MEMBERS**

Connie Dice  
Patricia T. Hendel  
Patricia Russo

**Testimony of**  
**Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW**  
**Legislative Director**  
**The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Before the**  
**Labor and Public Employees Committee**  
**February 25, 2010**

**In Support of:**

**S.B. 63, AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees**

**H.B. 5202, AAC Telecommuting Options for State Employees**

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of S.B. 63, AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees and H.B. 5202, AAC Telecommuting Options for State Employees.

**S.B. 63, AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees**

PCSW supports passage of S.B. 63, which would require employers of 50 or more employees to provide paid sick leave to their employees for the employee's or an employee's child's sickness, and to handle sexual assault or family violence issues.

Women and families are disproportionately affected by the lack of paid sick leave, in large part because most women remain the main caregivers of their families. If a woman needs to take a sick day for herself or a dependent family member but lacks paid leave, her options are limited: take unpaid leave and possibly risk her economic well-being or neglect her own health and/or the health of her loved ones.

Seventy-one percent of mothers with children under age 18 are in the workforce.<sup>1</sup> Working women are significantly more likely than men to take time off from work to care for a sick child. In the case of an urgently sick child, almost 78% of women take time off from work, while just 26.5% of men take off.<sup>2</sup> Studies show that men tend to put work first, and women adapt their work around their family, including both their children's and husband's work schedules.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Families and Work Institute, *Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home*, 2009  
<[http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times\\_Are\\_Changing.pdf](http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> The American Association of Psychotherapy, *Working Women More Likely Than Men to Stay Home With a Sick Child*, Spring 2008  
<<http://www.annalsofpsychotherapy.com/articles/spring08.php?topic=article5>>

<sup>3</sup> The American Association of Psychotherapy, *Working Women More Likely Than Men to Stay Home With a Sick Child*, Spring 2008  
<<http://www.annalsofpsychotherapy.com/articles/spring08.php?topic=article5>>

Additionally, working women find themselves caring for both minor children and aging parents. Women represent more than two-thirds of adults providing substantial assistance to elderly parents,<sup>4</sup> provide an annual average of \$1,521 in financial support to elderly parents, and spend an average of 23 hours a week (1,210 hours a year) providing care to elderly parents.<sup>5</sup>

While paid sick days are important for women as caregivers, this reform is also essential in protecting women's economic stability. As the earnings of women in the workforce have increased, so has their contribution to family income. In 2008, employed women in dual-earner households contributed an average of 44% of annual family income.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, without paid sick leave, the loss of a working mother's income could have a detrimental effect on her family's economic well-being.

Lastly, women in Connecticut comprise the majority of career fields that have the ability to easily spread disease.<sup>7</sup> These workers may be disproportionately affected by taking unpaid sick leave because their salaries are typically lower, making their income even more vital to their financial security.

- Healthcare Support Occupations: 87% Women
- Health Technologist and Technicians: 81% Women
- Personal Care and Service Occupations: 74.9% Women
- Education, Training and Library Occupations: 74% Women
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations: 54% Women

The PCSW believes paid sick leave is an essential workplace reform that will help working women balance both their careers and their families without risking their economic well-being.

## **H.B. 5202, AAC Telecommuting Options for State Employees**

PCSW also supports passage of H.B. 5202, AAC Telecommuting Options for State Employees, which would enhance telecommuting options. In 2007, we released *A Women's Economic Security Package* which identified allowing greater flexibility in work schedules and reduced work week options, as well as telecommuting as key components to ensuring women's economic stability. Policies that support workers as they provide care for family members or take care of their own health are essential for a strong Connecticut workforce.

Women's employment patterns have changed significantly in the last few decades. However, workplaces have not kept pace. Two-thirds of women who had their first child between 2001 and 2003 worked during their pregnancy, compared with just 44% who gave birth for the first time between 1961 and 1965.<sup>8</sup> In addition, women are working later into their pregnancies. Eighty percent of women who worked while pregnant from 2001 to 2003 worked up to one month or less before their due date compared with 35% who did so in 1961-1965.<sup>9</sup> Providing pregnant women the ability to work from home or take voluntary schedule reductions during the last stage of pregnancy would provide a sense of relief to working women who, due to financial reasons, must remain in the workforce until the birth of their child.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau<sup>10</sup>, the majority of working adults who leave for work between 5:30 -7 a.m. are men while the majority of adults who leave for work between 7 a.m. -8:30 a.m. are women. Additionally,

---

<sup>4</sup> Richard W. Johnson and Joshua M. Wiener, "A Profile of Frail Older Americans and Their Caregivers," Urban Institute, The Retirement Project Occasional Paper Number 8, February 2006 Table

<sup>5</sup> Charles R. Pierret, "The 'sandwich generation': women caring for parents and children," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2006, Table 2.

<sup>6</sup> Families and Work Institute, *Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home*, 2009

<sup>7</sup> <[http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times\\_Are\\_Changing.pdf](http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf)>

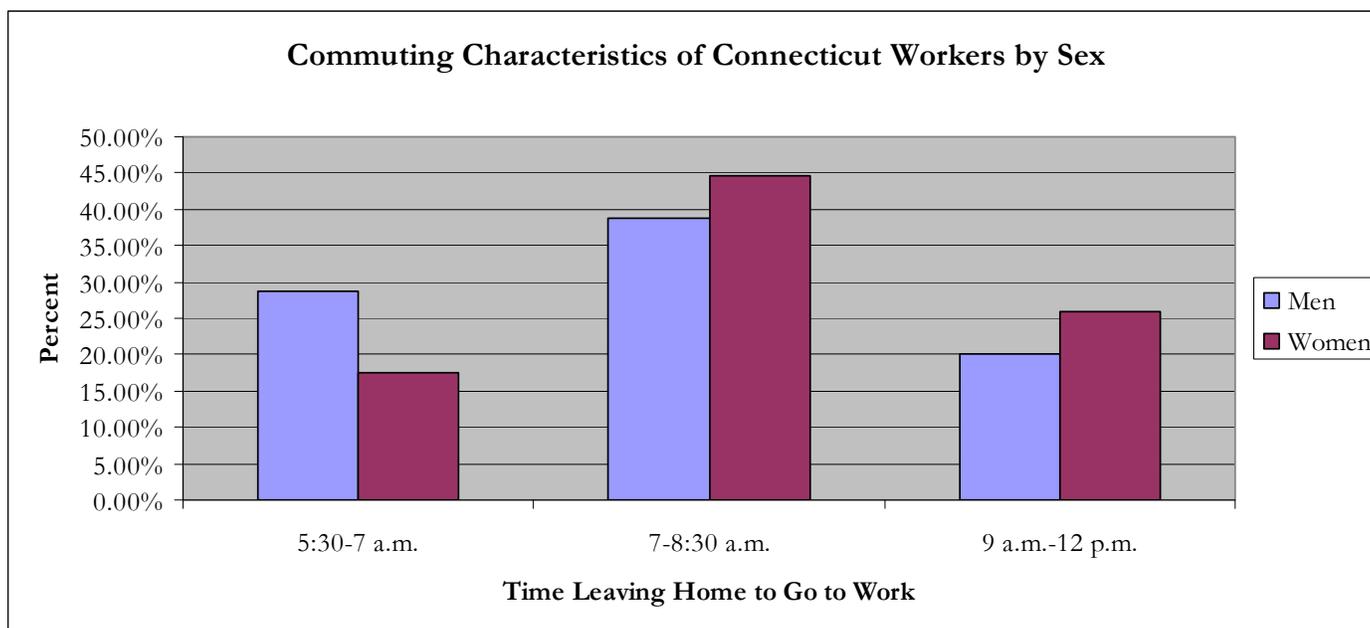
<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2008-2008 Estimates, Connecticut Civilian Employed Population Over 16 Years of Age, Sex by Industry

<sup>9</sup> <[http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/employment\\_occupations/011536.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/employment_occupations/011536.html)>.

<sup>10</sup> <[http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/employment\\_occupations/011536.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/employment_occupations/011536.html)>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, Connecticut Commuting Characteristics by Sex

more women (26%) than men (20%) leave for work between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. While the Census Bureau does not provide information about why women tend to leave for work later than men, it can be inferred that because women do generally bear greater responsibility in caring for children and their elderly family members, women tend to balance their family responsibilities in the morning before getting to work. Telecommuting may prove highly beneficial for women who are constantly working on balancing their work and family obligations.



Lastly, current economic realities make redefining retirement and economic security for older adults vital to Connecticut's economy.<sup>11</sup> In 2009, the PCSW and the Commission on Aging released a report entitled *Elders Living on the Edge: Toward Economic Security for Connecticut's Older Adults* and includes the Elder Economic Security Standard Index (ESSI).<sup>12</sup> This report measures the amount of income older adults in the state need to make ends meet.

According to EESI, an older woman who lives alone, rents her home and relies entirely on the Social Security payment will fall nearly \$12,000 short of basic economic security each year.<sup>13</sup> EESI also found that:<sup>14</sup>

- Poverty increases with age and is much more common among older women than men. Elder poverty disproportionately affects women of color and those who live alone;
- The demise of pension and employer-sponsored retirement plans, lower rates of homeownership, and fewer financial assets held by households place a greater weight on Social Security as a guaranteed source of income, particularly for women;
- More than 40% of Connecticut's elderly women rely almost exclusively on Social Security for their annual income;
- Older women with lifetime earnings which reflect the statewide median retirement income do not fare much better than those who rely on Social Security alone. Even those with retirement accounts, private savings and pensions may fall short of economic security.

<sup>11</sup> Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. *Elders Living on the Edge*, 2009

<sup>12</sup> Wider Opportunities for Women. *Elders Living on the Edge: Toward Economic Security for Connecticut's Older Adults*, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. *Elders Living on the Edge*, 2009

<sup>14</sup> Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. *Elders Living on the Edge*, 2009

Many older adults must remain in the workforce past retirement in order to make ends met; however, due to a lack of flexible work options many end up working in lower paying occupations. Voluntary schedule reductions and flexible work schedules would go a long way in helping older adults remain in positions that provide for greater financial stability and benefit employers by helping them retain employees with valuable skills, expertise and experience.

We appreciate your attention to these matters.