

Connecticut General Assembly



PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

News  
Release

18-20 Trinity St., Hartford, CT 06106 • 860/240-8300 • [pcsw@cga.ct.gov](mailto:pcsw@cga.ct.gov) • [www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/](http://www.cga.ct.gov/pcsw/)

CONTACT: Christine Palm, Communications Director at 860/240-8449; or 860/836-2145

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - April 8, 2015**

## Despite Educational Gains in the Past 25 Years, Women in Connecticut Still Face Higher Rates of Poverty Than Men Do

*Connecticut Receives a "B" Grade on Women's Poverty and Opportunity Index; Equal Pay Would Likely Cut Poverty Rate in Half for Working Single Mothers*

**HARTFORD**—According to a new report released today by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), Connecticut received a "B" on indicators related to women's poverty and opportunity, ranking the state 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation. The General Assembly's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) is the state's lead agency in partnering with IWPR, whose *Poverty & Opportunity Composite Index* scores U.S. states based on four metrics: educational attainment, business ownership, poverty, and access to health insurance coverage. Overall, the status of women in these areas has worsened in the majority of states (29) in the last decade. In 21 states and the District of Columbia, women's status with regard to poverty and opportunity has improved, including in Connecticut.

"Women in Connecticut have made significant gains in the last 25 years, but still face a persistent gender wage gap and higher rates of poverty than men in the state," said Carolyn Treiss, executive director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), and a member of IWPR's Status of Women in the States National Advisory Committee. "This latest report demonstrates, more than ever, that we need to consider policies that address these inequities. That's why we're working on legislation to enhance transparency in wages, advance paid family and medical leave, and expand Temporary Family Assistance, among other initiatives."

### Poverty and Women

In every state, there are more women living in poverty than men. In Connecticut, 10.6% of women over 18 are living in poverty, compared with 7.8% of men. However, 27.3% of Hispanic women and 20% percent of black women in Connecticut live in poverty, compared

with only 6.9% of white women and 7.1% of Asian women who live in poverty, highlighting the ethnic disparities in poverty within the state.

### **Pay Equity Would Cut Poverty in Half for Some Women**

The report highlights the case for pay equity: if working single mothers in the United States received equal pay, the very high and persistent poverty rate for families with a working single mother would be cut nearly in half, from 28.7% to 15% percent. (Single mothers have the highest rates of poverty in every state.) Connecticut ranks sixth in the smallest percentage of households headed by single women with children who live below poverty (34.7%).

### **Women and Education**

While the report finds that, on average, women in the United States receive more college degrees than men, access to education varies across racial and ethnic groups. In Connecticut, 28.6% of Hispanic women have less than a high school diploma, compared with 6.5% of white women. Additionally, only 10.7% of Connecticut's Native American women hold a bachelor's degree or higher, while 40.4% of the state's white women and 61.2% of the state's Asian/Pacific Islander women hold one.

### **Millennials and Poverty: Women are Better Educated, but Poorer**

The trend toward greater educational attainment while also experiencing greater economic insecurity is especially pronounced among women of the so-called Millennial generation. In Connecticut, Millennial women are much more likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher (44.8%) than Millennial men (35.6%). And yet, Millennial women in Connecticut are also more likely to live in poverty than Millennial men: 16.7% of Millennial women live below poverty, compared with 11% of Millennial men.

### **Business Ownership**

Women in Connecticut also own a much smaller share of businesses than men. In Connecticut, women own 28.1% of businesses, ranking the state 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the share of businesses owned by women. Between 1997 and 2007 (the most recent data available), the share of women-owned businesses in Connecticut increased from 25.5% to 28.1%.

### **Health Insurance**

In 2013, 11.2% of women in Connecticut lacked health insurance. Nationally, Hispanic, non-union women are particularly unlikely to have access to health insurance, with less than half of this population receiving coverage. The number of women with access to health insurance in the state may be affected by provisions in the Affordable Care Act (ACA), given that Connecticut has adopted the ACA's Medicaid expansion.

Additional data on poverty and opportunity among millennial women, older women, immigrant women and women living with same-sex partners, along with detailed breakdowns by race and ethnicity, is available at [www.statusofwomendata.org](http://www.statusofwomendata.org).

### **PCSW's Role**

As per its mandate, the PCSW advises policymakers on the effects – intended and otherwise—on the state's roughly 1.4 million women over the age of 18. To combat poverty among women of all ages, the PCSW is supporting several pieces of legislation that would help enhance women's economic security, including bills to:

- Establish a system of paid family and medical leave, which would be particularly helpful to low-income single mothers who are responsible for their own care and the care of loved ones, and are often one illness away from falling deeper into poverty;
- Expand Care4kids, the state's childcare subsidy program, to include low-income women who are seeking higher education; and
- Make the Temporary Family Assistance Program, Connecticut's cash assistance program for working families, into one that is more responsive to the needs of the families receiving assistance and is designed in a way that better promotes their chances for long-term economic success.

This is the second in a series of releases from IWPR's *Status of Women in the States: 2015* project. In March 2015, IWPR released the data on [women's employment and earnings by state](#), including projections on when women in each state would receive equal pay. Throughout the spring, IWPR will release additional reports with state-level data on Violence & Safety, Health & Well-Being, Reproductive Rights, Political Participation, and Work & Family. Since the first *Status of Women in the States* in 1996, the reports have been used to increase community and private investment in programs and policies that improve outcomes for women throughout the United States. Visit [www.statusofwomendata.org](http://www.statusofwomendata.org) for more information about the *Status of Women in the States* project and upcoming releases.

*About the PCSW: The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1973 under Sec. 46a-1 of the Connecticut General Statutes to study and improve Connecticut women's economic security, health and safety; to promote consideration of qualified women to leadership positions and to work toward the elimination of gender discrimination. As a non-partisan arm of the General Assembly, the agency monitors, critiques and recommends changes to legislation in order to inform public policy, and assesses programs and practices in all State agencies for their effect on the state's women. The PCSW serves as a liaison between government and its diverse constituents, and convenes stakeholders, including the business, non-profit and educational communities, local governments, and the media, in order to promote awareness of women's issues.*