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**Testimony of
Teresa Younger, Executive Director
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the Government Administration and Election Committee
Wednesday, March 17, 2010**

Re: Governor's Bill No. 28 An Act Consolidating State Agencies and Eliminating Certain Legislative Commissions

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone and members of the Government Administration and Election Committee:

I am Teresa Younger, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. I am testifying before you today in opposition to the Governor's Bill No. 28 An Act Consolidating State Agencies and Eliminating Certain Legislative Commissions. The PCSW provides leadership and expertise on 10 statutorily mandated bodies including the Commission on Child Support Guideline, Commission on Health Equity, Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations, Child Day Care Council and the Trafficking in Persons Council. These are not duplicative bodies and the perspective and expertise we bring is critical and informed.

This testimony and the attached folder highlight our work and our dismay, disappointment and objection to the Governor's recommendation to eliminate legislative commissions. On the right hand side of the folder you will find a packet of testimony from women and organizations that know and support of our work, it reflects both our local and national partners. Please take the time to read through our packet.

Here at the PCSW we understand, as well as anyone, the challenging times the State is facing and the difficult decisions you continue to make. We have seen budget cuts of nearly 65% this year. We have streamlined and created additional efficiencies out of necessity. We have reduced our staff by half -5 people- and reduced our work schedules and salaries from 15 to 40% for the remaining staff. These decisions were not easy but necessary and even with them we at the PCSW are still intensely committed to serving the women and their families in this state. We have done our part and now more than ever a well informed Assembly and proper representation is needed.

When I was being interviewed for the position as Executive Director of the PCSW, I told the selection committee that I while I loved the work, mission and mandate of the agency, I hoped one day we would no longer need a Commission on the status of women because women will have achieved full equality. And I share

with all of you today, my hope that one of these days, I actually do come before you urging you to *eliminate* the PCSW. But in all honesty that day is NOT today. Hope and hard work have only gotten us so far and we are not there yet. Perhaps, someday our work will no longer be needed because by then women will make the same pay as men, will *not* pay more for their healthcare, and we will make up half the heads of corporations, half the directors on state and corporate boards and commissions, will not have to fight for health care access and health research, and will file no discrimination complaints because there is no longer harassment at work; when there's no domestic violence, and young women grow up believing they can live safely, and securely, into their old age – because they truly can.

Unfortunately, we all know that day isn't coming any time soon. Change takes time. Who knows where the women and the families of Connecticut would be without the PCSW? For thirty-seven years we have been the state's leading force for women's equality. We have been there through so much; legislation prohibiting sex discrimination in credit transactions; laws enacted to protect pregnant workers; legislation defining and prohibiting sexual harassment; the first family and medical leave protections in the country; legislation requiring insurance programs to provide coverage for a minimum of 48 hours following a mastectomy; legislation requiring health insurance plans to cover a minimum of 48 hours' hospital stay for normal childbirth and 96 hours for Caesarian sections; laws improving the education and compensation of early childhood education professionals; development of Care4Kids programs; establishment of the HUSKY programs; and the list goes on.

PCSW is the only nonpartisan comprehensive state institution that evaluates laws and policies for their impact on the lives of women. Our job is to provide information, analysis, and assistance to the General Assembly, state agencies, state leaders and the public on all matters concerning women. We represent a small investment that produces a sizeable and valuable return. In the past year, we've spoken to 60 groups, had more than one million hits to our website from a block away and as far away as France, Korea and India. We sent our electronic newsletter out to over 40,000 people. We've had several hundred calls to our office for assistance, and a hundred media hits. We monitored over 200 bills, testified on over 50 and have been at the apex of several critical issues.

Our budget for FY 11 is \$505,000, that's 36 cents for each of Connecticut's 1,399,625 women over the age of 18. This doesn't even include the next generation of women who will work, pay taxes, raise families or vote in Connecticut. Some would argue, I would argue, that this is a worthy investment of "the people's money."

Though there is much to brag about I would like to point out to you that the legislative commissions may actually be some of the most efficient and effectively managed agencies in the State. We are streamlined in a multitude of ways. Our personnel and fiscal supports are provided through the Office of Legislative Management which allows our remaining staff to concentrate on fulfilling our mandate. We continue to reduce our overhead by taking advantage of our shared office space and splitting expenses on our machine rentals and supply orders with the Commission on Children and Latino and Puerto Rican Commission—we have been doing this for years. At the PCSW we have significantly cut our operating costs by reducing our printing, expanding the amount of information on our website and communicating electronically. And we have increased our accountability by adopting early and embracing the Results Based Accountability Process.

Over the past year, the PCSW, like the other legislative commissions, has come under fire from some quarters for being an "advocacy" organization. And while we're not on the front line of advocacy, we do, in fact, directly affect the public policy that makes the best advocacy possible—it is one of the things we do. After all, the word "advocacy" comes from the Latin meaning "to call together – to summon." That's what we do: we call together the various, diverse voices from across the state so you, as legislators, know what's on the minds of your constituents. In February, we had well over 100 of them come to our annual "Women's Day at the Capitol" to voice concern on issues ranging from women and the recession to education to pay equity to incarcerated

women to housing to leadership development to environmental pollutants. On that day, a crowd of women diverse in its racial composition, the ages of its members, economic strata, profession and geography, bore witness to the importance of the PCSW's work on issues of women's health and safety, economic security and the elimination of sex discrimination.

Advocacy is only part of what we do. Our work also emanates *from* the Capitol *to* the women and families you represent. We have over the years convened a variety of groups in order to bring issues to state government; the PCSW convenes the *Young Women's Leadership Program*, which highlights the concerns of women ages 18-35 years; convened the *Connecticut Women's Health Advisory Council*, a statewide coalition of experts and advocates working together to improve health care for women and girls; and the *Women In the Trades Exchange*, to increase opportunities for women in the skilled trades and technical careers. Additionally, we go where the women are through public hearings that we hold throughout the state that give voice to women by highlighting their concerns about financial security. PCSW provides leadership and expertise not just on 10 statutorily mandated bodies but six boards and 17 coalitions.

Our budget represents the type of State spending that saves money in the long run. For example, over the past ten years, the PCSW has provided Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention Training to nearly 10,000 state employees in agencies such as the Banking Department, Connecticut State University System Central Office, the Department of Revenue Services, the Department of Correction, the Office of the Attorney General and Legislative Management. These trainings were once free but now state agencies pay \$300 for a two-hour sexual harassment training session required by law for all supervisors.

Prevention is the key to State savings and, as you know, it sometimes takes time to see the fruits of our labor. Many of our responsibilities are on-going because change takes time. A lawsuit finally settled a few months back against the Connecticut Department of Corrections is a perfect example. In 2003, when DOC corrections officers and other staff alleged serious misconduct by coworkers and supervisors, PCSW was asked to step in. Through a court-ordered stipulated agreement, the PCSW retained former Superior Court Judge Beverly Hodgson to serve as Sexual Harassment Consultant to monitor all investigations and resolutions of sexual harassment and retaliation claims, and to assist the Department in improving its policies and procedures. We monitored the performance of the Department as it implemented measures to change the culture of sexual harassment then prevalent there. The original suit may have been near \$125 million; the final settlement was \$2.5 million. Though it took time and commitment, the culture of harassment at the DOC changed and the people of Connecticut are better off.

Without prevention, the State, as an employer, is vulnerable to additional sexual harassment lawsuits, potentially costing the taxpayers millions of dollars, and untold distress. Our role will now be to serve more as a watchdog to monitor whether State agencies are actually providing these required trainings and if so, by whom. The savings from a preventable lawsuit saves the people in this state millions of dollars and reinforces a positive work environment.

There are many opportunities for us to bring together voices that matter; to ask the difficult, critical questions; yes, to be the watchdog. That's our mandate: to study all matters concerning women and to act on those findings so the people most likely to have the deepest effect on our society can be informed. Women make most of the economic decisions affecting families. Women determine how children are educated. Women make up half the workforce, volunteer our time a third more often than men and make 80% of philanthropic contributions. And the PCSW is the one out there talking with this highly influential – but underrepresented – population.

We work diligently to promote women in leadership roles. In fact, in 2008 a record number of women, 102, ran for elected office. We were pleased to see this increase and continue to promote women in a variety of roles.

However, it should be noted that women make up 51% of the total population and a little over 30% of the General Assembly. But having women in the General Assembly is not the only place where leadership is needed. We maintain a "Talent Bank" of women interested in serving on State boards and commissions. In 2009, there were over 450 women listed in our Talent Bank. We are truly pleased that the talent bank is now completely searchable electronically by appointing authorities.

In order to provide you with accurate research and analysis we released several publications last few years and among them was *Getting to a Better Tomorrow: Economic and Financial Security*. The gathering of this information gives a greater understanding of the women we represent, the challenges they face and the policy initiatives we need to move us all forward. As a continuation of our commitment to providing original research, we released the *Elder Economic Standard Index*, in conjunction with the Commission on Aging. This report highlights the cost of living in Connecticut for those citizens over 65 years of age. In your folders you will find a list of gender and Connecticut specific data sheets that we have in our office. Please feel free to refer to it as need be.

These are just some of the ways in which the PCSW's work has helped gain our state recognition as a national leader on the issues of women's economic security, health and safety and gender discrimination.

Women are the key to economic development and security and while we have made a great deal of progress, we are not fully equal yet, and there is still much work to be done. While Connecticut ranks first in the nation in individual earnings, we rank 40th in terms of the wage gap between women and men. Women are still victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; childcare workers are still paid far less than truck drivers; and women are still far more likely than men to be poor as they grow old.

Because of the work of the PCSW, our state government has been better equipped to address the needs of working parents, victims of sexual harassment, women with health care concerns such as breast cancer and osteoporosis, women business owners, parents seeking child support, women leaving welfare for work, childcare workers, and women entering nontraditional occupations. Because of the work of the PCSW our state has been a national leader on the issues of women's economic security, health and safety and gender discrimination, battles still faced by women today.

At the PCSW, we are working not just for today but for the next generation so they can grow up in a world where full social, political, and economic equality is possible for everyone. We bring you the analysis, the information, the voices, and the stories that assist you in your efforts to build that world. Our budget represents a small investment to achieve an important and valuable goal. We are proud of the role we play in bringing these important issues forward, and of the responsibilities we assume in working with the General Assembly, state agencies, and others to address them. We proud of the work we have been able to deliver, the leadership we have been able to provide and the ability to lend voice to the policies that affect the lives of every woman in Connecticut. Many challenges lie ahead and women understand as well as anyone the consequences of decisions that need to be made; they only want those decisions to be well informed and intentional.

Thank you.