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Testimony of
Natasha M. Pierre, JD, MSW
Legislative Director
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Thursday, February 19, 2009

In Support of:

H.B. 5427, AAC Green Manufacturing Programs and the Production of Environmentally Preferred Products

H.B. 5488, AAC Training for Green Jobs

H.B. 6141, AAC A Task Force on Green Enterprises

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 5427, H.B. 5488 and H.B. 6141, which would train and prepare Connecticut workers for green jobs. We are here today to encourage the inclusion of women in this emerging field. If we do not intentionally include women, this will be yet another field that passes by half of the state's population.

Green collar jobs represent an important new category of work force opportunities because they are relatively high quality jobs, with relatively low barriers to entry (require more education than high school, but less than a four-year degree), in sectors that are poised for dramatic growth. The combination of these three features means that cultivating green collar jobs for a variety of people is an effective strategy to provide workers with meaningful, community serving work, living wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities.

Today, growing numbers of women are intentionally targeting their education toward environmental careers. They are finding that the market for well-qualified women environmental professionals is wide open with excellent employment opportunities.¹

¹ David J. Warner. *Environmental Careers, A Practical Guide to Opportunities in the 90's*.

Additionally, holding a non-traditional occupation increases a non-college woman's chances of attaining a high wage category by 48.66%.²

However women's increased interest in working in the environmental field is not reflected in the actual numbers. Green jobs are almost entirely male – on average women represent 1.65% of the energy efficiency building workforce, and 18% of the alternative energy workforce.³

Average Pay & Women's Employment in Occupations Going Green⁴

Energy Efficiency Building

Occupation	Percent Women	Average Annual Salary
Construction Laborers	2.7	\$30,950
Sheet Metal Workers	3.7	\$42,640
Insulation Workers	1.9	\$41,480
Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	2.2	\$37,300
Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	0.9	\$40,630
Hazardous Materials Removal Workers	n/a	\$39,210
Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	1.5	\$47,350
Carpenters	1.9	\$41,260
Electricians	1.7	\$48,100
Boilermakers	n/a	\$51,420

Wind

Occupation	Percent Women	Average Annual Salary
Team Assemblers	n/a	\$26,470
Laborers & Freight, Stock and Material Movers: Hand	18.6	\$23,840
Computer Controlled Machine Tool Operators	n/a	\$33,690
Cutting, punching, & press machine operators; metal & plastic	21.6	\$28,540
Drilling & Boring Machine Tools Setters	n/a	\$32,050
Customer Service Representatives	68.5	\$31,040
Welders	8.1	\$33,960
Production, Planning & Expediting Clerks	54.3	\$41,050
Machinists	5.2	\$36,370
Maintenance & Repair Workers: General	3.1	\$34,350

² Sharon H. Mastracci, Ph.D. *Labor Pains: Employment and Training Programs for Women in NTOS*. Ann Arbor: UMI Publishing, 2001.

³ Wider Opportunities for Women. *Women and the Green Economy*, November 2008.

⁴ Ibid.

An inclusive State green job plan should include recruitment, orientation, retention, and sexual harassment policies that directly address the concerns of women, such as:

Recruitment: ⁵

- Employers must assess skills, abilities, and aptitudes for nontraditional work by incorporating information on transferable skills in the hiring process and utilizing aptitude tests that are as bias-free as possible.
- Recruitment sources must be expanded to include job training programs and community-based organizations, pre-apprenticeship programs, secondary and vocational education systems, and local women's employment training programs and career centers.

Orientation:

- Information must be provided to all employees on the formal and informal rules and regulations on the job, including company policies supporting women in nontraditional jobs and prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Problems of isolation and stalled skill development by assigning several women to the same work environment must be avoided. A buddy or mentor who will teach skills and be supportive and who will identify appropriate skill assignments must be identified.
- Access must be provided to training opportunities for women to learn skills through occupationally-specific math training, pre-vocational training such as tool identification and safety, and physical conditioning.

Retention:

- Key issues should be addressed that commonly affect women, such as job assignment and promotion, family care and transportation, and health and safety concerns.
- Promoting the development of support mechanisms for women on the job, such as placing more than one woman on a worksite, encouraging support groups, and setting up online networks.
- Ensuring that there are proper facilities and equipment for women on the job.
- Monitor the progress of the union or company in preparing the workplace for women on an ongoing basis through nontraditional task forces and by conducting exit interviews.

Sexual Harassment

- A strong written policy prohibiting illegal discrimination against any employee that specifically addresses sexual harassment as prohibited conduct and describes steps to be taken if harassment occurs.
- Formal and informal problem solving mechanisms, grievance procedures, investigate measures and disciplinary procedures to resolve sexual harassment complaints.

⁵ Ibid for recommendations section.

- Conducting ongoing awareness trainings for every level of employee to review organizational policy, build problems-solving skills, review relevant law, and discuss their responsibility to create a harassment-free workplace are all valuable tools.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and look forward to working with you on this emerging issue.