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**Testimony of
Shoshanna Silverberg
The Young Women's Leadership Program
Before the Human Services Committee
Thursday, February 5, 2009**

In Support of: H.B. 5230, AAC A Pilot Program to Provide Housing & Services to Transitioning Young Adults

Senator Doyle, Representative Walker and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's (PCSW) Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP).

The YWLP is dedicated to understanding and voicing the needs of Connecticut's young women ages 18-35. Today I speak in favor of HB 5230, as it addresses a number of these needs.

As a point of reference, in Connecticut a person must earn \$21.11 an hour to afford the rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment. This "housing wage" is the amount a person must earn to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment, that is, without spending more than 30% of their total household income on housing costs. In fact, a person earning the state's minimum wage must work nearly three full-time jobs to afford the statewide fair market rent of \$1,098 per month for a two-bedroom apartment. In terms of annual income, a Connecticut household must earn \$43,911 a year to afford a typical two-bedroom rental.

As the economic climate thickens and we strive to invest in social programs that are absolutely necessary, I urge you to support measures such as HB 5230 for several reasons. One is that providing safe, affordable housing for young adults transitioning out of the Department of Children and Families is simply essential if we expect them to succeed - period. Additionally, ensuring age-appropriate developmental and behavioral health services constitutes a preventative approach to issues that might otherwise emerge down the line, such as unintended pregnancy, homelessness or incarceration to name just a few. Being proactive even in these tough economic times and requiring inter-agency collaboration to support this population is a crucial step towards improving outcomes for young women in the state of Connecticut. HB 5230 also provides Connecticut's General Assembly with an opportunity to continue leading our nation in the passage of evidence-based policies aimed at networking social services and empowering youth.

The PCSW and YWLP appreciate the Human Services Committee's commitment to Connecticut's young women and look forward to working with the committee to address this and related issues in the future.