



Appropriations Committee
Budget Hearing re: Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Submitted by: Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For decades, CWEALF has worked alongside the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to illustrate the issues affecting women living in Connecticut. Together, we continue to educate and inform lawmakers on how their decisions may impact – positively or negatively – women of all demographics across the state.

The PCSW plays an essential role in our State government by providing research, information and analysis to elected officials as well as the general public about all matters concerning the status of Connecticut women. Just a few months ago, for example, the PCSW released the 2015 Self-Sufficiency Standard that calculates how much income a family must earn per town in Connecticut to meet basic needs, a valuable resource in creating pathways to lift families out of poverty.

The PCSW's exemplary work can also be seen through its efforts co-chairing the Campaign for Paid Family Leave, a coalition of over 60 organizations that continues to grow in support and momentum across the state. Through its representation on numerous other coalitions, the PCSW also works to improve reporting of sexual assault on college campuses, expand protections for victims of human trafficking and fight for equal pay for equal work. Most importantly, the presence of the PCSW in the Connecticut legislature ensures that the voices of women in our state are acknowledged and reflected in major policy decisions.

It is no secret that the barriers facing women today stem directly from systemic indecencies that continue to prevent us from experiencing the same rights and opportunities as men. Women in Connecticut are paid just 83 cents to every dollar paid to men (a discrepancy even greater for women of color)¹, constitute 69% of the state's low-wage workforce², and pay substantially more money for personal care products. In short, the work of the PCSW is far from finished.

If a budget is a representation of a state's values, reducing or eliminating funding for the PCSW when there's so much more work to be done suggests that Connecticut does not see the importance of ensuring equal rights, representation and opportunities for women and girls in our state. By cutting the PCSW's funding, the state will undermine the Commission's ability to protect the unique needs of women and will jeopardize the hard won progress that the PCSW has made thus far.

CWEALF urges the Appropriations Committee to fully fund the PCSW. Thank you.

¹ <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/9-2015-ct-wage-gap.pdf>.

² http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf