

November 3, 2025

Members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force  
City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place  
San Francisco CA 94102  
CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force Members and Staff

RE: Response to Proposed Changes by the Commission Streamlining Task Force issued by memo October 24, 2025

We thank the members of the Task Force and staff for your hard work on this complex issue that affects every corner of San Francisco and for the opportunity to respond to the proposals presented in Item 7 City Employment and Benefits Bodies: Civil Service Commission on your November 5, 2025 Agenda.

#### OATH OF OFFICE

San Francisco Charter Section 10.101 currently states:

**“I am opposed to appointments to the public service as a reward for political activity and will execute the office of civil service commissioner in the spirit of this declaration.”**

This oath governs, directs and drives the Commission’s Charter mandated duty to provide qualified persons for appointment to the service of the City and County of San Francisco through policy, rulemaking and oversight authority over the core functions of the merit system, in addition to elected official salary setting authority, and provides insulation from political interference.

This unique oath taken upon appointment by Civil Service Commissioners in addition to the standard oath taken by officers of the City and County of San Francisco, was placed in the San Francisco Charter by vote of the electorate and **reaffirmed time and time again by the electorate** of the City and County of San Francisco. As provided in section 10.103 of the San Francisco Charter, the Human Resources Director takes the same oath of office.

**Response: The oath should remain in the Charter.**

#### TERMINATION FOR CAUSE AND TERM LIMITS

Current requirement in Charter Section 10.100: “A commissioner may be removed only upon charges preferred in the same manner as in this Charter provided for elected officers.”

For cause termination and 6-year terms are important protections against political interference and ensuring the independence of the Commission and Commissioners. The Commissioners’ appointments should not be at-will as this runs counter to the charter established mechanisms for checks and balances e.g., inspections and audits by Commission staff, including positions designated as exempt from the merit system; salary setting for elected officials; and appeal to the Commission of many decisions made by the Human Resources Director. For cause termination also ensures continuity of leadership for the Commission and protects commissioners from newly elected mayors asking for the resignation of commissioners or terminating commissioners.

**Response: We oppose the proposal changing Commissioner appointments to “at will” and concur with the staff recommendation that the “for cause” termination requirement be maintained. We agree with proposal that 6-year terms be retained.**

In response to the Task Force proposal on term limits, the Task Force may want to consider adding some flexibility to address unforeseen circumstances.

#### NOMINATION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

Equally significant is the selection of one of the most important positions in the City and County: the office of **Human Resources Director** whose incumbent **implements and enforces the Rules, policies and procedures of the merit system**. The Civil Service Commission as an independent body currently provides qualified candidates for consideration by the mayor who may accept or reject these candidates AND request additional candidates. Having only a consultative role assigned to the Civil Service Commission jeopardizes the very independence of the merit system.

**Response: The Civil Service Commission should retain its authority to provide independent analysis of Human Resources Director candidate qualifications and nomination to the mayor and retain this authority in the Charter.**

#### QUALIFICATIONS

Although Charter Section 4.101c which states that unless otherwise provided in the Charter, Commission be broadly representative of communities of interest, neighborhoods, and the diversity in ethnicity, race, age, and sexual orientation of the city and county and have representation of both sexes, **and now covers the intent contained in Charter Section 10.100**, having the Charter requirement that two members be women has over the years guaranteed that women were well represented.

**Response: Concur with proposal that Charter Section 4.101c supersedes the current requirement.**

#### REQUIREMENTS AROUND MEETING OPERATIONS

A core San Francisco value is openness and transparency which is reflected in the Charter provision that the regular meetings of the Civil Service Commission shall remain open to the public and held such time as it will give the general public and employees of the city and county adequate time within to appear before the Commission after regular daily working hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Such person or persons shall be given an opportunity to be heard by the Commission before final action is taken in any case involving such person or persons. This provision has been utilized by appellants and members of the public to have their cases heard at times that do not conflict with working hours.

**Response: This provision should be retained in the Charter to prevent negative impact on employees, appellants as well as members of the public and guarantee an opportunity to be heard.**

#### CHARTER AUTHORITY

Voters of the City and County have since 1900 voted repeatedly to have an independent Civil Service Commission and merit system contained within the Charter. To remove these provisions flies in the face of a long-established voter directive for an independent, non-political merit system and core San Francisco values.

**Response: The provisions contained in Charter Section X must remain in the San Francisco Charter.**

Respectfully submitted

Draft for Discussion