



August 28, 2025

Commissioner Ed Harrington
Chair, Commission Streamlining Task Force
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 362
San Francisco, CA 94102

Submitted via email to Commission.Streamlining@sfgov.org

Re: Preserve the critical work of the Juvenile Probation Commission

Dear Chair Harrington and Commissioners,

As juvenile justice service providers, we write in strong support of the Juvenile Probation Commission (JPC) and its critical work overseeing the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department. The JPC was created in 1989 with the understanding that San Francisco's new Juvenile Probation Department, the state's only youth-focused probation department, would require strong management and full public transparency to safeguard young people, reduce the risk of county liability, and ensure that San Francisco's investments in services and supervision were delivering lower recidivism and improved public safety.

Since then, the JPC has led San Francisco through decades of consequential changes. These include a stunning decline in youth arrests and detentions, prudent investments in community-based prevention programs, the closure of Log Cabin Ranch, the repurposing of the Juvenile Justice Center for long term commitments, and numerous leadership transitions.

San Francisco is now in the midst of another major transition – one that has greatly elevated and expanded the JPC's oversight role. In 2023, California closed its Division of Juvenile Justice and shifted to an entirely county-based system for youth. Under this new approach, counties must serve larger populations of youth, all with serious offenses, through Secure Youth Treatment Facilities (SYTFs). To provide the healing and rehabilitative support youth need, probation departments have been tasked with developing new services for a wider age range of youth, including robust reentry support. In some counties, probation is floundering amid this transition. The Los Angeles County Probation Department, for example, is in a state of crisis, leaving the county mired in legal challenges. In San Francisco, the JPC is closely monitoring the Juvenile Probation Department's roll-out of its SYTF and all associated programming, aftercare, and community support. This leadership is critical to ensuring that high-needs youth are healthy, safe, and prepared for a smooth transition back to the community.

The JPC is a highly active commission with monthly commission-wide meetings that are supplemented by regular subcommittee meetings. This structure allows the commission to expedite decision-making and quickly advance San Francisco's budgetary and programming priorities for the Juvenile Probation Department. Among other responsibilities, the JPC selects Juvenile Probation Chief candidates, provides crucial governance to the department, closely monitors departmental data, and serves as an essential safeguard for youth. Under the leadership of Margaret Brodtkin, a lifelong champion of youth and president

of the JPC since 2019, the commission has been more influential and active than at any point in its history, vigorously monitoring and managing the Juvenile Probation Department through several major transitions.

As nonprofit providers who serve probation-involved youth throughout San Francisco, we are among the first to know of challenges or successes within the Juvenile Probation Department. For us, JPC meetings are a critical tool for communicating with the Juvenile Probation Department, gleaning information on probation policies and statistics, and voicing concerns. Giving providers, families, and community members meaningful influence over budgets, priorities, and the wellbeing of youth is only possible because the JPC has the authority to govern.

The JPC has provided years of essential leadership to the Juvenile Probation Department. To reduce the JPC's authority now would risk reversing decades of progress towards a more humane and effective approach to serving youth. We strongly urge the Commission Streamlining Task Force to preserve the governance role of the JPC. This will allow the JPC to guide San Francisco through the current juvenile justice transformation, while continuing to advance public safety and transparency.

Sincerely,

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