



August 28, 2025

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**To: Commission Streamlining Task Force**

Sophie Hayward, Member, City Administrator's Office  
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Andrea Bruss, Member, City Attorney's Office  
Ed Harrington, Member, BOS Designee  
Jean Fraser, Member, CEO of Presidio Trust/Mayor's Designee  
Via email: [CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org](mailto:CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org)

**Re: Keep Juvenile Probation Commission as a Governing Body**

Dear Members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force,

On behalf of the Youth Law Center, I write to express our **strong support for keeping the Juvenile Probation Commission as a governing body**, and our strong opposition to any proposal that would convert the Commission into an advisory body.

The Youth Law Center (YLC) is a public interest law firm that advocates on behalf of children in the foster care and juvenile delinquency systems so they receive the supports they need to grow and thrive. For more than thirty-five years, YLC has worked to promote a safer, fairer juvenile system in San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>

To understand why the Juvenile Probation Commission must remain a governing body, it is critical to remember its history. The Juvenile Probation Commission was created in 1989 by Proposition L, which moved authority over Juvenile Probation from the Superior Court to the newly created Commission. Significantly, this structural change was supported *unanimously* by the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor as a remedy for decades of systemic problems, and to ensure that juvenile justice decisions would be

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g., *Shaw v. City and County of San Francisco et al.*, San Francisco Superior Court, case no. 915763, <https://www.ylc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Shawcomplaint.pdf>.

transparent and inclusive of community voices.<sup>2</sup> The proposal had no opposition and a wide array of supporters. Among them was Coleman Advocates, who called out decades of poor conditions, ineffective programs, and management crises in juvenile probation, and emphasized the need for public scrutiny as essential to advancing real reform.<sup>3</sup>

**Over 35 years later, San Francisco is in many ways a statewide leader in juvenile justice, but this progress is no coincidence—it is directly tied to the Commission’s governing authority, which has enabled the City to pursue meaningful and sustained reform.**

The Commission’s governing authority ensures that the community has a voice in shaping a system that profoundly impacts children and families—disproportionately from San Francisco’s communities of color. Particularly in a moment when San Francisco has made a commitment to equity and justice for all young people, weakening the Commission’s role would be a significant and unacceptable step backward.

San Francisco’s juvenile justice system exercises immense power over the youth and families affected by it. Decisions regarding youth incarceration, family separation, youth programming, and probation supervision implicate fundamental rights and long-term life outcomes. The Commission’s governing role is essential to the checks and balances that safeguard young people’s rights and well-being within this high-stakes system.

**For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Task Force to maintain the Juvenile Probation Commission as a governing body with its full authority, and to reject any proposal to convert it into an advisory body.**

Thank you for your consideration, and for your commitment to ensuring that San Francisco’s juvenile system remains just, accountable, and community centered.

Sincerely,



Meredith Desautels, Directing Attorney



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<sup>2</sup> San Francisco Voter Information Pamphlet, Office of the Registrar of Voters, Nov. 7, 1989 Consolidated Municipal Election, p. 80, [https://webbie1.sfpl.org/multimedia/pdf/elections/November7\\_1989short.pdf](https://webbie1.sfpl.org/multimedia/pdf/elections/November7_1989short.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*