

Stephen Torres
Mission District
San Francisco, California

September 11, 2025

The San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force
City Hall
Hearing Room 408
1 Dr Carlton B Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Chairperson Harrington and Members of the San Francisco Commission Streamlining Task Force,

I am writing to urge you to retain several key Advisory, Governance, and Regulatory bodies as you meet your goal to streamline the governance of our City. As a supporter of Proposition E, I felt it was extremely important to review and remove some of these bodies from can be a bloated and exhausting layer to our governmental processes.

However, there are several that have been identified for review and recommendation for removal that would prove disastrous for community oversight and representation as well as actually worsen the bureaucratic process for which our City has been closely identified.

Of particular note of importance are bodies that serve as citizen oversight for public safety and environment, but most especially regulatory bodies such as the Arts Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Entertainment Commission. Since I served as an Entertainment Commissioner, I can speak to the importance of the work of this Commission and Staff directly.

The EC Staff are among the hardest working I have ever had the pleasure to work with. They are extremely well-versed in City code, and most importantly, navigating the delicate balance that are residential-commercial nightlife and entertainment corridors that not only give our city its inimitable character, but are vital to our economy.

During my time on the Commission, I was witness to how crucial this is to ensuring success for all parties involved and preventing negative and potentially costly outcomes experienced by other municipalities that do not have such a body.

The Entertainment Commission was born out of the advocacy of the nightlife community in addressing a bloated system of codes and permitting that was held solely by the San Francisco Police Department. Not only was this centralization onerous and inefficient, it also was disconnected from the community and often, unfortunately provided a space where abuse could occur.

When I first became a commissioner, Director Weiland and Deputy Director Azevedo wisely advised me to become as familiar with coding and sound as I could. I took their advice and found in the reams of outdated code due for review one that specified that a permit was required for "masked balls". As a member of the LGBTQ community, I shared with EC staff that this may have been one of what were often pretext coding for the legal harassment of the LGBTQ community, especially any that were not conformed to preconceived gender norms. The Staff

recently submitted this piece of coding for removal to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and has been stricken, not only removing useless barriers to nightlife, but old laws that were possibly meant to harm not help.

The Entertainment Commission has been at the forefront of major public health crises and recent campaigns informed by the indispensable Commissioner Laura Thomas, Commission President Ben Bleiman, and carried out with community care and connection by Senior Analyst Dylan Rice which have saved countless lives of San Franciscans and visitors alike.

The rigors of cohesive community planning and the rigors of the insurance industry and how it impacts nightlife and the communities around it have been uplifted by Commissioners like Cyn Wang, Al Perez, and Dori Caminong.

I share these anecdotes because I think it is important to realize that bodies like the Entertainment Commission and its staff are crucial not only to the effective streamlining and function of our government, but informed by representation of the very communities it has sworn to protect. The Commission works with and is informed by law enforcement, like former Commissioner Lieutenant Dave Falzon, which sits on the Commission alongside two representatives from community stakeholders, one from public health, one from urban planning, and two, like myself, from the nightlife industry. These are all critical representatives of our City who are actively working on its behalf.

When identifying commissions and other bodies for streamlining, I strongly encourage you to do your due diligence and recognize that those listed, like the Entertainment Commission, are actually streamlining and creating effective, representative government in real time.

Sincerely,

Stephen Torres

Former San Francisco Entertainment Commissioner, Industry Seat No. 2