

To; Commission Streamlining Task Force

From: Allen Cooper, M.D. Professor of Medicine Emeritus, Stanford University

Re: Restructuring of the Advisory Council to the Commission on disability and Aging Services

I am currently the president of the Advisory Council to the Commission on Disability and Aging Services. I have been on the Council for about 6 years and for the past 3 years have served as one of the Advisory council's representatives on the Oversight and Advisory Council to the Dignity Fund. I have during this time been impressed by how well the Department of Disability and Aging Services accomplishes its mission of providing important services to these potentially vulnerable populations. I have developed a sincere admiration for the leadership and staff of the Department. The City should be proud of their example of the good that government can do.

As you undoubtedly know the Committee fulfills a requirement to receive funding under the Older Americans Act and is part of the California Commission on Aging's structure. Under San Francisco's San Francisco Administrative Code § 5.6-4. ADVISORY COUNCIL in addition to those relating to the Older Americans Act it is charged "with other matters that affect the well-being of the population served".

Recently we were advised that your Committee, under the provision of Proposition, E has designated the Advisory Council as borderline inactive. I was surprised by this. Infrequent meetings and numerous vacancies were cited. In the past three years for which there is posted data there may have been three canceled meetings. During the three years before that I recall perhaps only one canceled meeting. The most recent was in August and done because our staff liaison felt there might not be a quorum, although I did see the data, I agreed to do this. Indeed, August and December are months when attendance is frequently low at all meetings. Last December there was not a formal meeting but a Christmas party and a celebration to recognize the previous Council President, who had served for six years, was held with excellent attendance.

The issue of vacancies is also somewhat complex. We currently have nine supervisorial appointees and six Commission appointees out of authorized number of eleven of each. There are two individuals, one for a supervisorial appointment and one for a Commission appointment that have been held in abeyance by staff pending the outcome of your review. That would make ten and seven. During the last year two active members passed away. They were both Commission appointees. Illness and even death is unfortunately, not unexpected since the minimum age for membership is sixty and members often serve for many years. Non-the-less twenty two may be a large number and thought of how to reduce

it is worthy of consideration. Currently the membership is geographically diverse by virtue of representing most of the Districts. It is also ethnically and socially diverse with members from the Asian, African American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander and Native American communities as well as several LGBT individuals and two military veterans. There is also considerable expertise. A nurse, an attorney, a physician, a PhD psychologist, a former nursing home director are among its members. Its members belong to numerous organizations that represent seniors and those with disabilities.

The approach of merging the two committees and replacing it with nine members from commissions and only three from the supervisors is cannot maintain either the diversity or the expertise that the current Council has. I would be happy to discuss ideas of how to reduce the over all size while minimizing the disruption of an otherwise representative body.

The question of the need for cost reduction was also raised. As far as I know each member receives about \$30 per meeting for transportation etc. Even if there were 22 members who attended all 12 meetings the cost would be about \$7,000 dollars per year total but is certainly less in reality. Some members would, I suspect, forgo the reimbursement further reducing the over all cost. The three senior staff who attend the two meetings spend 30 hours per year at them and this would be reduced to 24 or 18 hours if the meetings were merged and are 2 or 1.5 hours. Thus, only a modest savings of staff time.

Lastly a consideration of the value of the Councils should be considered. They do not set policy or have veto powers over any activities. They do provide transparency by reporting to Supervisors as well as community organizations. Through discussion at meetings feedback and ideas are expressed to staff. The value of this cannot be quantified but, In my experience with this in academia, when staff are required to present publicly, they hone their reports and think deeply about what they will say often refining their ideas.

Overall I agree some refining and perhaps size reduction may be worthwhile but hope it will be done not with a hatchet but with a scalpel.