

Re: Support for the Commission on the Status of Women

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

I am writing to express my strong support for the continued existence of the San Francisco Commission and Department on the Status of Women (COSW/DOSW) as a standalone body with its full powers, oversight authority, and independence intact.

I make this request as a professional who has dedicated more than fifteen years to advancing gender and racial equity — as Director of Reproductive Freedom for All California, as a former policy advisor to then-Attorney General Kamala Harris, and currently as Vice President of Public Affairs at Essential Access Health — and also as a bisexual woman with four generations of family rooted in San Francisco, married to an immigrant, and raising our daughters in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the only entity in San Francisco solely tasked with transforming our city into a fully gender-equitable place to live and work. Its role is not symbolic; it is substantive and urgently needed. The Commission and Department advance policies, programs, and legislation focused on health and safety, economic opportunity, and civic engagement for women, girls, and nonbinary people. In a moment when basic rights — from bodily autonomy to equal pay — are under threat nationwide, San Francisco must not scale back its commitments. It must lead.

We cannot improve what we do not measure. That's why the Commission and Department must be empowered — not weakened — to assess where we truly stand. We need to establish baseline indicators across multiple equity measures and track real-time progress transparently, using dynamic tools accessible to both the public and policymakers. These insights must drive how the City allocates funding, designs programs, and evaluates its success in achieving gender equity.

The Commission's value is also found in how it works. It brings together a diverse group of leaders and community members — many of whom identify as LGBTQ+, people of color, immigrants, and caregivers — and creates a public platform for dialogue, oversight, and accountability. This diversity is not incidental. It is essential to democracy. The public deserves — and needs — places in government where decisions are made not behind closed doors, but in open conversation with the people most impacted. Eliminating or consolidating the Commission would send the wrong message at the worst possible time. It would erode transparency, limit public participation, and remove critical checks and balances from our civic infrastructure.

San Francisco has always been a city that leads with its values. Let's not dismantle one of the few institutions that embodies those values so clearly. I respectfully urge the Task Force to preserve the Commission and Department on the Status of Women as independent, fully empowered entities. Let's not undermine decades of progress, let's build on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shannon Olivieri Hovis, MPP
Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco