



## COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

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October 4, 2025

Commission Streamlining Taskforce  
Ed Harrington, Chair  
Andrea Bruss  
Sophie Hayward  
Natasha Mihal  
Sophia Kittler

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

The Homeless Oversight Commission was recently established by voter approval in 2022. It was supported unanimously by the Board of Supervisors and 67% of voters. Voters were frustrated with the status quo on homelessness, even with a swelling budget thanks to the release of multiple years of Prop C Our City Our Home funds. Before this was passed, HSH was the largest department without independent oversight, and the commission was specifically designed to create checks and balances.

This body is critical for several reasons. The Department was suffering with large numbers of vacancies in supportive housing. Some of the housing under the department had miserable conditions. After the commission was formed, transparency created pressure to address the vacant units. There was now a place for public input directly to the executive branch. Unhoused people frequently visit the commission to air issues. Before the creation of the commission there was no place to talk directly to the management of the department. This is helpful for the management – they often don't hear from folks in shelter, front line staff and folks who are living this day to day. Quality services and performance do not come from armchairs; they come out of participation from those who are impacted.

Previously, getting information from the Department was challenging, often policies would change without public airing. Now, information is gathered and shared. Outcomes of subpopulations, disparities in receipt of services, overall number of people housed as compared to the total need, and deep dives into data that is receiving plenty of sunshine is enjoyed by the people of San Francisco. All of these are good government basics. The commission is essential to the continued improvement of Departmental performance and most importantly to transforming the lives and experiences of unhoused people.

The goal of having this and any other commission is participatory democracy. Any changes should be conceived within that framework. The Homeless Oversight Commission is an excellent example of achieving just that. It is a split commission which creates checks and balances in a city that has the strongest mayoral structure in the country short of New York City. It is independent, which is critical.

Our homeless system in SF has been disfigured dramatically because homeless people themselves are consistently used as political wedges. As a result, decisions at the top are frequently made based on political value and not based on data driven best practices. It is independent because it is a split commission. In addition, if the mayor can remove any commissioner for any reason, not just cause, and is making all the appointments, obviously the value of the commission disappears. It is a rubber stamp and participatory democracy disappears.

In reviewing your materials, there is no explanation about what problems are being solved by changing supervisors' appointments to mayoral appointments and changing "for cause" removal to "at will". It is clear, however, that these changes create a politicization of commissioners and commissions that is antithetical to the purpose of these commissions. HOC is made up of people who bring their expertise and community experience to their roles on these bodies rather than being beholden to a politician's agenda.

If we want a functioning democracy, we need the HOC to continue as designed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JFR', with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Jennifer Friedenbach  
Executive Director