



COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

September 25, 2025

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

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

The Our City Our Home oversight body is an advisory body responsible for overseeing the homeless gross receipts tax and develops an annual investment plan. It also is required to publish an annual report. The budget recommendations from OCOH go through the normal budget process. Given the large amount of funds and the necessary subject expertise to ensure a successful investment plan, the Our City Our Home Oversight body plays a critical role. The idea that this work could be taken by HOC, is just not reasonable, as the HOC agenda is so jam packed they rarely have time to finish their own work at hand, and certainly don't have the capacity to do such intensive deep dives.

The body is extremely active, members conduct research, hold listening sessions, gather information from stakeholders and are exceptionally committed to ending homelessness for as many people as possible. This means the city gets free time from citizens who - how wonderful is this - are able to ensure the city effectively address the most pressing issue of our city.

As the organization who led this voter initiative at the November 2018 ballot, we made over 70,000 calls to voters and knocked on over 35,000 doors. What we heard repeatedly is that voters liked the idea but were worried that the money

would be misspent or wasted. We explained that the fund would have an oversight body appointed by the Board of Supervisors, Mayor and Controller's Office. Voters who were skeptical were reassured and were persuaded to support the measure. Changing that now would erode trust among voters.

San Francisco has a long history of participatory democracy. The processes of the Our City Our Home is incredibly collaborative and only through collaboration can innovation arise. The Our City Our Home oversight body has ensured funds are spent wisely – for example, recommending that the safe sleep sites were not cost effective and should be phased out. The city was spending \$120,000 per tent, and residents had poor conditions, including being negatively impacted by inclement weather, and faced rodent infestations. The oversight body also recommended data driven aggressive spending on OCOH funds, especially communities that were seeing increased homelessness such as families, Bayview residents and youth. The oversight body also saw to a diversification of the shelter system, adding new components such as tiny homes, semi and non-congregate beds. The behavioral health system also saw new innovations in approaches to mental health and substance use issues such as the successful SOMA rise program and a new crisis stabilization unit.

Overall, the oversight body has ensured by working with city and county staff that over 5,000 people have been successfully housed including 1,700 children, over 15,000 people receiving behavioral health services including the addition of 400 more beds, almost 4,000 households sheltered, and over 22,000 households receiving prevention services

Going forward, the body will help city staff, the board and mayor make tough decisions to address the operating budget deficit given the Mayor's very critical but difficult decision to use of one-time funds to pay for new programs with ongoing operating costs, an approximate \$40 million operating deficit in Behavioral Health and \$30 million deficit in shelter. These recommendations will come out of a deep dive into data looking at success rates, cost benefit analysis and input from front line workers and unhoused people themselves. Doing this work outside of a political context is incredibly important to ensure success on this issue. It also takes far more elbow grease than the incredibly busy homeless department staff has time for.

Thank you for consideration and support. Please keep the highly effective Our City Our Home oversight body as designed. If it isn't broke – don't fix it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JFR', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Jennifer Friedenbach
Executive Director