



COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

October 4, 2025

To Commission Streamlining Task Force,

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

This letter is in regard to the Shelter Grievance Advisory Committee. This body meets only quarterly but provides a very important and focused role. It oversees due process in the city's shelter system. The very specialized knowledge the volunteers bring to the table is a great example of why participatory democracy is so important, adding substantive benefit to the Executive Branch's Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing – far more than is spent on administrative support.

The shelter system in San Francisco serves our most vulnerable residents. Residents who when kicked out of shelter find themselves often in a serious safety risk. For women and elderly people especially, life on the streets can turn tragic quickly. Shelter residents are at the mercy of the programs that serve them.

The process creates an excellent management tool as well as the procedure ensures that shelters are following their own rules. However, there are over 20 shelters, and each is operated independently, so it is very easy for things to slide sideways without oversight. Staff are often underpaid and undertrained. Sometimes, new shelters fail to follow the procedure, or sometimes old shelters fall off. The oversight body ensure that there are clear transparency and tracking mechanisms in place. Looking at the data they can see if a shelter is disproportionately kicking more people out than normal, and that indicates a red flag for corrective action.

The body is balanced with providers, consumers, advocates and volunteer arbitrator. Robust conversations take place among people with far greater insight and knowledge than can be expected of city administrators. They are volunteers taking the time to ensure that shelters themselves remain safe, while practices are fair to unhoused people.

HOC has such a huge workload reviewing contracts, preventing corruption and overseeing the entire system, a laser focused look at shelter due process simply would not occur and the risk of losing that is high. Lives are at stake. We recommend this advisory body stays.

Sincerely,

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

Jennifer Friedenbach
Executive Director