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Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Don't Erase the SF Commission on the Status of Women
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To: Prop E Commission Streamlining Task Force StreamliningCommission@sfgov.org

From: Ditka Reiner

Re: San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women

I am a longtime supporter of the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women and am very concerned that years of hard work are going to be erased by blending this organization in with others. It's vitally important that we the women of San Francisco have a place that is all our own, and organization that looks out for us and one we fought for mightily!

I along with other women urge the Prop E Commission and Taskforce on Streamlining **to preserve the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women as an independent, and an autonomous governing charter-protected body.**

Established in 1975 by the Board of Supervisors and enshrined in the city's charter by 70% of the voters in 1994, the Commission and the Department on the Status of Women have become over the past fifty years a policy influencing institution. Its functions now include direct advocacy, data gathering, convening, and coordinating among city agencies involved in gender-based violence services.

We believe that the Commission and the Department on the Status of Women must be preserved because:

- Mayor Lurie's priority to promote public safety will not succeed unless gender-based violence, not just car break-ins, retail thefts and home burglaries are seen as public safety issues. Per the Department on the Status of Women *2024 Family Violence Council Report*, there were 6,658 reported incidents of domestic violence and 3 domestic violence homicides between FY2021-2023.
- Ending gender-based violence saves lives and money. According to a 2024 study funded by the Blue Shield of California Foundation, gender-based violence costs the State of California a staggering \$73.7 billion dollars, of which San Francisco alone would account for an estimated \$1.7 billion dollars annually. Per this study conducted by UC San Diego and Tulane University, the costs includes law enforcement, court proceedings, incarceration, medical expenses, supportive services, housing, and lost worker productivity. Researchers estimate that domestic violence costs an estimated \$88,000 per victim.
- Shelters, services, and crisis hotlines will have to compete with other Agency

priorities creating uncertainty and reductions in services as well as organizational closures.

- Agencies with gender-violence services such as the Mayor's Office of Victims' Rights and the Public Health Department's planning efforts will be less effective without the Commission/ Department's gender-based violence data they rely on.
- City employees involved in gender-based violence services will be unprepared to do their jobs without the Department's training programs.
- Without the annual Commission supported city-wide public campaigns to promote gender-based violence education, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking are likely to increase.
- According to United Nations statistics, prevention programs can reduce incidents of gender-based violence up to 20% or more.

These reasons are enough to preserve the Commission and the Department on the Status of Women as an advocate for half of the city's population. The Commission and later the Department were born out of the women's movement, a time when women did not have a public voice. We will not be silenced. We are a vital voting bloc—and we expect to be heard.

Sincerely,

Ditka Reiner

Don't Erase the City's Commitment to Women

San Francisco has long been a national leader in gender equity. That legacy is now at risk.

Buried in Mayor Daniel Lurie's proposed budget is a quiet but consequential change: eliminating the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) as a standalone agency and folding it—along with the Human Rights Commission—into a new “Agency on Human Rights.” Under this plan, DOSW's entire budget would be zeroed out. The Commission on the Status of Women (COSW) would remain in name only, stripped of its infrastructure, autonomy, and dedicated policy agenda. This is more than bureaucratic streamlining. It is an erasure.

For over 30 years, DOSW and COSW have led transformative work in San Francisco: reducing domestic violence and sexual assault, addressing sexual harassment in city government, combating human trafficking, and advancing pay equity, reproductive justice, and gender-inclusive services. COSW also led the city's pioneering implementation of CEDAW—the United Nations treaty on women's rights—making San Francisco the first in the world to apply its framework locally. This work has succeeded because it has been focused, resourced, and independent.

In 2002, C/DOSW released the *Justice and Courage* report responding to the murder of Claire Joyce Tempongko, a Filipina mother who was stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend in front of her children—after multiple attempts to seek protection from a system that failed her. An interagency panel produced the report that became a national model for coordinated response across police, courts, and service providers. That level of collaboration didn't happen by accident—it was driven by a department and commission solely dedicated to protecting women and their families.

Mayor Lurie asked departments to reduce budgets by 15% to address the city's deficit. But these proposed cuts go far beyond that. The Human Rights Commission faces a 38% reduction—nearly \$17 million—bringing its budget down to \$28 million. DOSW's budget, by contrast, would be eliminated entirely. While some staff may continue under the new agency, dissolving DOSW would end the city's only department focused on gender equity—along with decades of institutional knowledge, community trust, and targeted programs. This is not efficiency. It's a rollback.

San Francisco voters enshrined COSW in the City Charter in 1994 with more than 70% approval. Reorganizing it without public input or a dedicated budget undermines that mandate and sets a dangerous precedent: that voter-approved bodies can be quietly dismantled by administrative fiat.

The issues COSW and DOSW address—gender-based violence, discrimination, reproductive access, and equity for women, girls, and gender-diverse communities—are

not optional. They are fundamental to a just city. We urge the Board of Supervisors to reject this proposal. Restore funding for the Department on the Status of Women. Preserve the independence of the Commission. Let San Francisco continue to lead—not retreat—on gender equity, especially in these challenging national times.

- Caryl Ito, Commissioner, 1989-1998; Airport Commissioner, 1998-2010.
- Dr. Kathy Johnson, San Francisco Women's Political Committee (for identification purposes only)
- Dorka Keehn, Commissioner, 1999-2010
- Sonia Melara, Executive Director, 1995-2001
- Dr. Emily Murase, Executive Director, 2004-2020; Commissioner, 1997-2003.
- Julie D. Soo, Commissioner, 2009 - 2021; San Francisco Sheriff's Department Oversight Board, 2021 - present.