

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force Chair and Members,

My name is Dr. William Martinez, a licensed psychologist board-certified in clinical child and adolescent psychology and an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. In my professional roles, I have worked with immigrant communities in San Francisco for over 10 years. The views expressed in this letter are entirely my own and do not represent the views of my employer, the University of California, San Francisco.

I am writing to strongly advocate for maintaining the independence of the Immigrant Rights Commission (IRC). For the past 28 years, the IRC has played a vital, singular role in advocating for the rights of San Francisco's immigrant residents. It has served as a critical voice—informing the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on key policies and issues in collaboration with the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA). Its work remains indispensable, especially in these times of increased xenophobia, anti-immigration policies, and reduction in federal support for immigrant communities.

The IRC's contributions to addressing language accessibility and equity in our city cannot be overstated. In my role as the leader of outpatient behavioral health programs for children and adolescents, where 70% of the clinic population consists of families whose primary language is not English, I see firsthand how language barriers can profoundly limit access to necessary services. The IRC has also been an invaluable resource in supporting programs like *Fuerte*, another program I lead, which provides early intervention behavioral health services for newcomer immigrant students in the San Francisco Unified School District. The IRC often serves as a critical sounding board of resources and changes coming to local immigrant communities, allowing me to adjust our programming and amplify these resources through our program.

Moreover, I lead pediatric mental health efforts for the Health and Human Rights Initiative (HHRI), which provides training, consultation, research, and the provision of medical and psychological evaluations for immigrants seeking immigration-related legal relief. The HHRI has collaborated extensively with the IRC, contributing to various hearings held by the IRC and OCEIA. The IRC has been an indispensable forum to voice concerns from the healthcare sector to improve coordination across sectors for immigrant communities in San Francisco. Thus, through my professional endeavors, I am well aware of the important impact the IRC has on asylum seekers in our city.

At the heart of this issue is my own lived experience as the child of immigrants. I am deeply familiar with the barriers immigrant families face—whether due to lack of literacy about available resources, language access challenges, or systemic inequities. The IRC is uniquely positioned to address these barriers and amplify the voices of immigrant communities, who depend on its advocacy to navigate complex systems and make the city more just and inclusive for these communities.

The proposal to merge the IRC with the Human Rights Commission would undermine the independence and singular focus of the IRC, diminishing its ability to effectively represent the diverse immigrant communities of San Francisco. Furthermore, the recommendation to sunset

the IRC in three years is especially alarming. At a time when federal immigration enforcement has expanded significantly, the level of fear, trauma, and chronic anxiety among immigrants—particularly children—is at an all-time high. Now, more than ever, we need to strengthen resources for immigrant communities, not reduce them.

I urge the Commission Streamlining Task Force to reject the proposed merger and sunset recommendations. Instead, I call for maintaining the IRC as an independent commission and increasing its resources to meet the growing needs of our immigrant neighbors. The IRC's role is indispensable, and its continued existence is a matter of equity, justice, and compassion for some of our most vulnerable members of our city, particularly now.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and for considering the importance of preserving the independence of the Immigrant Rights Commission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Martinez".

William Martinez, PhD, ABPP  
CA Licensed Psychologist #28084