

To the Streamlining Commission Task Force,

I wish I could have been at your meeting today as you deliver on your commission recommendations. My name is Sonia Melara and I was the first Director of the Department on the Status of Women after San Franciscans passed the proposition that created a permanent Commission under the City Charter in 1994. I also served on the Commission on the Status of Women from 2017-2018. Under the Charter, the Commission is to be an independent, autonomous charter-protected governing body. As such, I urge you to keep it as is.

My history in the women's community and knowledge of the existence of the Commission go back many years. I am one of the founders of La Casa de Las Madres, which opened its doors to victims of domestic violence in 1976 as the first shelter in California and the second in the country. I was very honored to have served as the Director of the Department on the Status of Women until 2001. I can claim several accomplishments during the time of my administration. Among those, is the passage of CEDAW (The Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women) in 1998. We were the first City in the United States to do so. This Ordinance, provided several initiatives within City government to assess and develop solutions for the city to address equitable and safe treatment for everyone.

We were successful at doubling the funding for domestic violence at that time by having a strong voice in City government with a strong support from then Mayor Jordan, the Board of Supervisors, and the women's community.

Under Mayor Brown's administration in 1998, we sponsored the first San Francisco Women's conference fully supported by private sector funding.

I have witnessed other major accomplishments by subsequent administrations. All is due to the Commission being an independent, autonomous charter-protected governing body.

I believe that many things are going backwards for women in our country. San Francisco has always gone forward. Women represent 49% of the population and our voice matters.

Thank you

Sonia Melara