



October 15, 2025

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force Chair and Members,

I am writing to **strongly urge you to maintain and strengthen the Immigrant Rights Commission (IRC) as an independent, ongoing body.** At a time when immigrant communities face a new normal of federal immigration enforcement and increased xenophobic rhetoric, San Francisco's role as a Sanctuary City must be actively upheld, and I believe the IRC is the indispensable mechanism for that work.

The IRC serves as a cornerstone of accountability and community voice for the **one in three San Franciscans who are immigrants.** Since its founding in 1997, the IRC has established and cultivated trust between our immigrant communities and local government. The IRC and the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)—its programmatic partner—have fostered this essential relationship through regular work, which enables critical citywide efforts like the **SF COUNTS** campaign for the US Census, which requires streamlined, targeted outreach to hard-to-count immigrant communities. This foundation of trust is not optional; it is essential for the dignity, safety, and civic participation of our residents.

In my view, the IRC's work involves unique, specialized policy functions that cannot be diluted through consolidation:

- **Language Access Ordinance (LAO) Oversight:** The IRC was instrumental in establishing San Francisco's LAO in 2001, one of the first comprehensive language access laws in the nation. It remains critical in overseeing the implementation of the ordinance and ensuring City departments comply with the law.
- **Sanctuary Policy Integrity:** The Commission has championed and defended San Francisco's sanctuary policies, including playing a critical role in shaping the **Due Process for All Ordinance.** This work is essential to ensuring all residents feel safe accessing public safety and City services.
- **Strategic Advocacy:** The IRC is the vital policy body that informs the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on issues ranging from protecting immigrant workers and expanding healthcare access to defending the right of noncitizen parents to vote in School Board elections.

I respectfully urge the Task Force to not only maintain the IRC as an independent commission without a sunset date provision but to **strengthen it by ensuring it receives the needed staffing and resources.** Efficiency must never come at the expense of equity, accountability, or the protection of human rights. Any shift that weakens the IRC's independence would compromise its purpose and risk silencing immigrant voices at a time when they most need to be heard.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Celine Kennelly".

Celine Kennelly
Executive Director