

October 30, 2025

To: Commission Streamlining Task Force, City of San Francisco

CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org

CC: Michael Angelo Torres, San Francisco Commission of Animal Control and Welfare

Dear Chair Harrington and members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force,

On behalf of Animal Outlook, a national animal protection organization celebrating 30 years of advocacy for animals, I write to strongly urge you to reconsider the recommendation to eliminate the San Francisco Commission of Animal Control and Welfare. The Commission plays an irreplaceable role in protecting animal welfare and serving as a vital bridge between the public, advocacy organizations, and city authorities on critical animal protection issues.

Our organization has firsthand experience with the Commission's essential function in addressing serious animal welfare concerns in San Francisco. In 2024, Animal Outlook conducted an extensive investigation into animal cruelty at San Francisco's live markets, documenting shocking violations including frogs being decapitated, fish being bludgeoned to death, and turtles being hacked into pieces while still alive. These disturbing practices, which violate California's animal cruelty laws, demanded immediate attention from city authorities.

The Commission of Animal Control and Welfare proved instrumental in translating our investigative findings into meaningful action. When our team, including myself, our Director of Investigations Scott David, and Staff Attorney Jareb Gleckel, presented evidence to the Commission, they provided us with a crucial forum to share our findings with both city officials and the public. The Commission carefully reviewed our evidence, listened to testimony from local activists and organizations like Compassionate Bay, and took decisive action by voting unanimously 6-0 to urge city authorities to implement unannounced inspections and enforcement measures at these facilities.

The Commission continues to facilitate important community outreach efforts, including liaising between activist groups and San Francisco Animal Care and Control's current

work engaging with the Chinatown community about humane practices in live markets. This culturally sensitive outreach, which has received positive community response, demonstrates the Commission's unique ability to bridge diverse communities, city services and advocacy organizations around animal welfare issues.

Without the Commission, there would have been no clear pathway for our investigation to reach the appropriate city authorities or to generate the public awareness necessary for reform. The Commission served as an essential intermediary, ensuring that documented animal cruelty violations received proper attention and that community concerns were heard and acted upon. Their work resulted in national media coverage from CBS, Daily Mail, and SF Standard, bringing crucial attention to these overlooked victims of cruelty.

Eliminating the Commission would leave a significant gap in San Francisco's governance structure. Animal welfare concerns would lack a dedicated forum for public input, investigative organizations like ours would lose a critical partner in addressing cruelty, and the city would lose an important advisory body that helps navigate complex, culturally sensitive animal welfare issues.

The Commission of Animal Control and Welfare represents San Francisco's commitment to being a leader in animal protection. Its elimination would not streamline city government but rather create inefficiencies by removing a specialized body that effectively channels public concerns into actionable policy recommendations. The Commission's work directly impacts public health, safety, and the city's ethical standards regarding animal treatment.

I respectfully urge the Task Force to recognize the Commission's unique and vital role in San Francisco's governance and to reverse the recommendation for its elimination. The Commission has proven its worth through tangible results that protect both animals and public welfare, and its continued existence is essential for maintaining San Francisco's progressive stance on animal protection.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please feel free to contact me if you need any additional information about our work with the Commission or the critical role it plays in animal protection efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Williamson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ben Williamson
Executive Director
Animal Outlook

bwilliamson@animaloutlook.org