

From: [Allen Cooper](#)
To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
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Dear Task Force Members:

I am writing to address the proposed merging of various advisory bodies dedicated to Disability and Aging in San Francisco, specifically the Commission on Aging, the Commission on Aging, The Advisory Council on Disability and Senior Services and the Dignity Fund Oversight and Advisory Committee. Each of these organizations plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for their respective populations. However, they serve distinct purposes and focus on different aspects of community support and advocacy. The Advisory Council on Disability and Senior Services and the Commission on Aging (COA) address systemic needs and compliance with the Older Americans Act and the California Commission on Aging for State and Federal funding and under the Older Americans has broad responsibilities. The Dignity Fund Oversight and Advisory Committee ensures that dedicated tax resources are allocated effectively to meet those needs. The Dignity Fund itself was established through a broad coalition of over 137 organizations and 50 leaders to ensure that older adults and individuals with disabilities have a voice and sustained support and was the first Aging Initiative to include Older People with HIV, representing a commitment to equity, transparency, and community leadership. The Service Providers Working Group has give feed back from those on the ground doing the work. Proposals to reduce participation especially will undermine this essential diversity, risking the silencing of valuable insights that drive effective advocacy.

If the merger is carried out, I strongly recommend that the new Advisory Council retain a total of 22 members, maintaining its current structure with half appointed by the Supervisors and half by the Disability and Aging Commission and Mayoral bodies. The eleven supervisor-appointed members serve as a vital link to the community, facilitating a two-way conduit between the Department and those it serves. Currently, six members have been appointed by the Commission, though one has encountered difficulties attending meetings, potentially leaving six vacant seats. Now that the Mayor's Office on Disability (MOD) has moved to DAS, The Mayor's Disability Council should have two seats on the Advisory Council. The Service Providers Working Group should have a seat, and the Commission should reach out to not for profit organizations, including but not exclusively, the Dignity Fund Coalition, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Mayor's Office of Transgender Initiatives, and other organizations dedicated to the welfare of seniors to fill the remaining seats and to ensure a broad range of perspectives is represented.

In my experience candidates for the Commission seats have come to the Department and then been referred to the Commission. By having dedicated seats to be filled by the Mayors office and guidance Commission to the whom they should reach out to they will have less difficulty filling their seats. To be clear it is likely that there will always be vacant seats for either Supervisor or Commission appointments for a variety of reasons, such as death, illness or resignation. It is likely that functionally the Advisory will be always be smaller than 22 members. If the Council is reduced in size, perhaps to 16 as has been proposed vacancy problems will not be eliminated and it will actually be

smaller and be without the expertise and input that was the intent of original legislation.

To summarize my recommendations:

- Maintain the Advisory Council structure at 22 members, ensuring continued community representation.
- A seat should be given to a representative of Service Providers Work Group, thus filling the Dignity Fund seat allotted to the now disbanded Long Term Care Coordinating Committee.
- Two seats should be appointed by the Mayor's Disability Council.
- Retain the current five long-term members as well as two long time Dignity Fund members for their expertise while seeking diverse nominees from organizations such as the Dignity Fund Coalition, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the Mayors Office of Transgender Initiatives among others with a dedication to the wellbeing of seniors.

In conclusion, while the potential benefits of reducing participation and merging bodies—such as streamlined decision-making and resource optimization—may seem appealing, it will come at a significant cost. The risk of silencing diverse voices and undermining community representation is too great. Advisory bodies are built on the foundation of inclusivity, which is critical for addressing the complex and nuanced needs of the populations they serve. Maintaining a robust and diverse membership enriches the decision-making process and ensures that all community perspectives are represented, fostering innovation and creativity in problem-solving providing guidance to help a well function Department continue to do an excellent job.

I look forward to your response and am happy to meet and discuss this if you wish.

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