

From: [REDACTED]
To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
Subject: protect the arts
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Dear Task Force Members,

I write today as an artist, arts worker, and concerned citizen. My husband and I are longtime San Franciscans and public servants who moved here for art school, one of which (SFAI) closed and one of which (CCA) is about to close leaving this region without a standalone nonprofit art school. These closures are the result of many forces, among them the absence of robust civic protection for the arts. I think about it often as I follow the current proposals to restructure the Arts Commission, because decisions made now, in the name of flexibility and efficiency, may have an irreversible effect on our struggling creative communities.

The proposed changes strip the Commission of its hiring authority and budget approval powers, and reposition it as advisory. In the new structure, the Arts Agency director reports to the Mayor and all commissioners are mayoral appointees who serve at will. In this configuration, there are no meaningful checks on mayoral authority over arts funding and policy. An advisory body composed in this way is not an independent commission — it is an extension of the Mayor's office. I raise this not as a criticism of the current administration, but as a structural concern that will outlast any mayor.

I am asking for four targeted protections:

- 1. Fixed commissioner terms with removal only for cause.** Commissioners who serve at the Mayor's pleasure cannot offer independent judgment. Fixed terms with cause-based removal is a standard protection in comparable bodies.
- 2. Retained approval authority over significant expenditures.** A defined threshold — requiring Commission approval for grants or contracts above a set dollar amount — preserves independent oversight of consequential decisions without burdening daily administration.
- 3. Commission participation in director hiring and a bifurcated reporting structure.** The Commission should have a formal role in selecting the director — establishing mutual accountability from the outset — and oversight of program and policy decisions.
- 4. A mandatory structural review after two to three years.** Given the acknowledged uncertainty surrounding consolidation, a formal review reported to the Board of Supervisors would honor the Task Force's own instinct toward flexibility while creating public accountability.

The stakes are much broader than our beleaguered local arts community. These are good government concerns. San Francisco has prided itself on civic structures that distribute power thoughtfully. This proposal, as written, moves in the opposite direction.

Art is not extra, it is existential and it must be protected. Research has proven that dollars invested in the arts yield significant economic returns. The changes I am requesting are targeted and workable. I hope you will consider them before the ballot measure is finalized. Thank you for your continued commitment to this work.

Respectfully,

Erica Gangsei