

August 12, 2025

**To:**

San Francisco Police Commission  
Interim Chief of Police Paul Yep  
Mayor Daniel Lurie

**Re: Strong Support for Director Paul Henderson's Leadership at the Department of Police Accountability**

Dear President Clay, Commissioners, Chief Yep, and Mayor Lurie,

We are writing to express our strong support for Paul Henderson and his exemplary leadership of the San Francisco Department of Police Accountability. Recent media coverage has unfortunately amplified what appears to be a coordinated effort by a small minority of employees to undermine Director Henderson's authority through personal attacks rather than constructive engagement with the substantial reforms and improvements he has implemented.

**Henderson's Proven Track Record of Excellence**

The facts speak clearly to Director Henderson's effective leadership. Under his direction, the DPA's audit team has received multiple awards for their work, and he has successfully resolved longstanding operational challenges, including persistent difficulties meeting police misconduct investigation deadlines that had plagued the Department for years. These are measurable improvements that directly serve the public interest and enhance police accountability in our city.

Director Henderson has also been a strong advocate for the Department's mission, publicly fighting for adequate funding and resources. His testimony before the Board of Supervisors Budget Committee demonstrated his commitment to maintaining comprehensive oversight capabilities, even as the Department has lost approximately 40% of its authorized positions since 2021 due to citywide budget constraints entirely beyond his control.

It is true that many employees at DPA work very hard. We wear multiple hats. Most of us gladly jump in to help our colleagues when they need more help. The consistent underfunding of DPA and the immense stress that came with this budget cycle cannot be attributed to Director Henderson.

**Personal Attacks Disguised as Professional Concerns**

The recent complaints appear to be personal grievances rather than legitimate management concerns. Several key facts support this assessment:

1. **Minority Opposition:** As noted in recent reporting, these complaints come from only four employees out of approximately 40 staff members. Other DPA attorneys, including Tinnetta Thompson, have publicly defended Henderson, calling the accusations “unfair,” “disingenuous,” and describing them as “bullying tactics” designed to discredit his accomplishments. The survey conducted in 2024 contained very personal insults directed at Director Henderson and at least two other members of management, rather than constructive criticism of any system or process at DPA.
2. **Budget Decisions Were Mandated:** The layoffs that critics cite were the result of citywide budget cuts, not Director Henderson’s personal choices. He advocated against these cuts and warned of their impact on the Department’s oversight capabilities.
3. **Timing of Complaints:** The escalation of complaints coincided with necessary organizational changes and accountability measures, suggesting resistance to reform rather than legitimate workplace concerns. In particular, the idea that any staff was “threatened” over deadlines is simply disingenuous. At a time when too many cases had passed the 270-day mark, management emphasized the need to complete our investigations in a timely manner. **Section 4.136(d)** of the San Francisco City Charter states, “DPA shall use its best efforts to conclude investigations of such complaints and, if sustained, transmit the sustained complaint to the Police Department within nine months of receipt thereof by DPA.” Director Henderson places the responsibility for ensuring that the Government Code section 3304 statute of limitations squarely on his attorneys and no one else..
4. **External Validation:** Significantly, even representatives from the police union have spoken in support of DPA staff members, indicating that under Director Henderson’s leadership, DPA staff have maintained professional relationships across traditional adversarial lines.

### **The Challenge of Leading Organizational Change**

Effective leadership often requires making difficult decisions that may be unpopular with some staff members. The resistance Director Henderson faces appears to reflect the natural tension that arises when longstanding practices are reformed and accountability is strengthened. It is not uncommon in any organization for some individuals to resist increased expectations and oversight, particularly when they have grown comfortable with previous arrangements.

As you well know, transforming any organization—especially one tasked with police accountability—requires steady leadership and the willingness to address performance issues and maintain professional standards. Internal accountability, such as timekeeping, sick leave abuses, quality control measures and timely delivery of efficient work has increased under Director Henderson. Some individuals may find this environment challenging and prefer previous management approaches that may have been less demanding.

## **The Danger of Rewarding Workplace Disruption**

Allowing a small group of disaffected employees to undermine effective leadership through public campaigns sets a dangerous precedent. If employees believe they can circumvent proper channels and use media pressure to remove leaders who hold them accountable, that will make it impossible to maintain professional standards or implement necessary reforms in any city department.

### **Recommendation**

I urge you to maintain your confidence in Director Paul Henderson's leadership and reject attempts to undermine his authority through personal attacks. The DPA serves a critical function in maintaining public trust in our police department, and this mission requires strong, consistent leadership focused on results rather than accommodating those who resist accountability.

Director Henderson has demonstrated his commitment to the Department's mission through concrete achievements and professional advocacy. The City would be poorly served by allowing workplace politics and personal grievances to override documented performance and dedication to public service.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters.

Respectfully,

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*\*\*\*Additional DPA employees indicated that though they wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiments in this letter, they felt uncomfortable signing their names to it for fear of retaliation from other DPA staff.*