

July 23, 2024

Ballot Simplification Committee Members
% San Francisco Department of Elections
City Hall, Room 400
1 Dr. Carlton B Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
Email: BSC.clerk@sfgov.org

Re: Proposed Changes to the BSC Voter Digest for the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund for Seniors, Families, and Persons with Disabilities

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing on behalf of our coalition of over twenty-five community based organizations regarding the initial draft digest for the measure establishing the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund. We respectfully urge the Committee to revise the present draft digest to more accurately reflect the City's existing housing policies regarding Extremely Low Income households and changes proposed by the measure.

The changes to the draft we propose below and in President Peskin's letter to this Committee will provide voters with essential context and greater clarity on what is a critically important and substantive charter amendment.

- (1) 'The Way It Is Now' fails to describe the clear and well documented gaps in the City's existing housing policies that the measure is designed to change.

The present draft provides only a fragmented, incomplete, and in part inaccurate description of the City's affordable housing system and its failure to provide housing opportunities to Extremely Low Income (ELI) households. For example, while the draft describes certain elements of the City's limited program to provide housing for ELI seniors it fails to acknowledge that the City has no equivalent program for ELI families or people with disabilities – needs that the measure seeks to address. Furthermore, in its description of the existing ELI senior program it suggests that somehow the program pays for rent the seniors "owe." In reality ELI seniors within the existing program do not "owe" rent. Rents are set at levels that they can afford.

The draft's vague descriptions of the City's existing system masks its glaring deficiencies. The draft states that the City provides rent subsidies to "some" affordable housing for ELI seniors. It also states that in addition to federal and state sources funding for such subsidies "other funding comes from the General Fund through the annual budget process." While such statements are not false they also gloss over the gross inadequacy of existing programs. According to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, as of this past March the ELI senior program which was launched in 2019 provided subsidies to only 53 senior households, less

than 12 households a year. And while the draft seems to imply that City's "annual" budget process provides funding for ELI affordable housing, in actuality the City only funded such housing in two of the past six fiscal years.

The existing draft's lack of any description of gaps or inadequacies in the City's funding of ELI affordable housing is particularly troubling given the extensive documentation provided in the measure's findings. For example, as referenced in the findings, the Department of Disability and Aging Services has found that without subsidies to lower rent levels, a majority of all senior renters living alone cannot qualify for the senior housing that the City finances and builds.¹ Similarly, the Affordable Housing Leadership Council City in their report earlier this year noted that over the past 19 years, the City's housing program had fallen notably short in creating housing opportunities for ELI households relative to other income categories. The Council concluded: "It is imperative to achieving California's housing goals that a permanent source provides funding for operating subsidies due to their critical role for affordable housing developments serving extremely low-income households."²

Nowhere is there any suggestion that such chronic unmet needs exist in the existing draft of "the Way it is Now."

- (2) The draft incorrectly asserts that: "Under Proposition __, each year the City would be required to set aside monies from its General Fund to contribute to the Fund"

This statement is factually incorrect on two related grounds. First, this measure is not a "set aside" of a particular source of revenue as with certain other Charter Amendments. Rather, it creates a fund into which the City is required to make a minimum annual contribution. Second, the measure does not require that the General Fund be the source of funds.

As expressly described in Subsection (p) in the findings of this measure, the \$8.25 million may be funded by existing special dedicated funding sources. Certain of these existing non-General Fund sources (such as 2022 Proposition M) are expressly dedicated to fund rent subsidies or affordable housing. If this measure is approved by the voters, City Hall will have the ability to fully pay for the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund with non-General Fund sources.

We request that reference to the General Fund be omitted from the description of the measure.

- (3) The digest fails to mention the public accountability requirements and process for the administration of the Fund.

Another feature of the Charter Amendment omitted in the draft digest is the establishment of a public process for the drafting of the implementing policies needed to maximize the effectiveness of the program. It is important that voters are made aware of this and the public reporting requirements included in the measure.

¹ [2022 Aging and Disability Housing Needs Report](#), p. 12 (also referenced in finding (g))

² [Affordable Housing Funding and Financing Recommendations Report](#), p. 60

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the SF Housing Opportunity Campaign*

Meg Heisler

Policy Director, San Francisco Communities Against Displacement

*Endorsers include:

Faith In Action

Community Tenants Association

Senior and Disability Action

People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER)

Chinese Progressive Association

United to Save the Mission

Black to the Future

South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN)

San Francisco Anti Displacement Coalition

Council of Community Housing Organizations

Asian Law Caucus

Chinatown Community Development Center

Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation

Young Community Developers

Mission Economic Development Agency nd

Bill Sorro Housing Program (BiSHoP)

Homeless Prenatal Program

San Francisco SafeHouse

San Francisco Housing Development Corporation

Self-Help for the Elderly

Women's Housing Coalition

Black to the Future

Caminante Cultural Foundation

San Francisco Community Land Trust

Compass Family Services

San Francisco Latino Task Force

Race and Equity in All Planning Coalition (REP-SF)

Bayview Hunters Point Multipurpose Senior Center

Affordable Housing Alliance

Coalition on Homelessness