



AARON PESKIN
市參事 佩斯金

July 25, 2024

Ballot Simplification Committee
c/o Karlie O'Toole, Elections Division Manager
City Hall, Room 48 [Via e-mail BSC.Clerk@sfgov.org]
Re: Requested Changes to the City Commissions and Mayoral Authority Charter Amendment

Dear Chair Packard and Members of the Ballot Simplification Committee,

I want to preface this letter by underscoring how significant this measure is. This will be the most sweeping change to the City's Charter since 1995, and will remove half of the City's commissions, which provide an essential avenue for civic engagement and public input into San Francisco government. It is critical that voters understand the breadth of impact that this measure will have, if adopted.

With that in mind, I respectfully request your consideration of the following changes to the Ballot Digest for the "City Commission and Mayoral Authority" measure proposed by Together SF Action PAC, in the interest of stating accurately and transparently for voters what the measure does. While I recognize that the length and complexity of the measure makes it difficult to summarize succinctly, I believe the digest can be made accurate, thorough, and clear without exceeding 500 words.

- **Recommendation # 1: Edit language in the last 3 bullet points of "the Way it is Now" section to make it accurate.**
 - The Mayor and Board may remove ~~members from some commissions~~ most commissioners "at will," while a small number of commissioners may only be removed for official misconduct.
 - The City pays some commissioners and provides ~~them~~ some commissioners healthcare benefits.
 - The Police Commission and the Chief of Police adopts rules governing police officers' conduct.

- **Recommendation # 2: List the commissions which will proactively be removed from the Charter should the voters approve the measure, versus only disclosing what is unchanged regardless of voter action.**

In the second bullet point of "The Proposal", the digest specifies all the commissions which will be retained in the Charter, but none of those that will be removed from the Charter. The actual impact of this measure *is not retaining* commissions in the Charter but *removing them*. In order



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to be accurate, the digest should also specify the commissions which will be *removed* from the Charter. It stands to reason that the actual policy action of this measure is to remove – that's literally one of the reasons this measure is a Charter Amendment, because only a Charter Amendment can eliminate Charter bodies, versus just retaining them which requires no action. Given that digest length is an issue, and if you cannot include lists of what is both being retained and eliminated, I urge you to consider only choosing to include the active list, and to consider adding the following as the second bullet in this section:

Eliminate 25 commissions from the Charter, including Human Rights, Health, Human Services, Entertainment, Environment, Status of Women, Building Inspection, Youth, Homelessness Oversight, Small Business, Historic Preservation, Sheriff's Department Oversight, Sanitation and Streets, Public Works, Arts, Juvenile Probation, Library, MTA Citizens Advisory Committee, PUC Citizens Advisory Committee, PUC Rate Fairness Board, Parks, Recreation & Open Space Advisory Committee, Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee, Our Children Our Families Council, Office of Early Childhood Education Citizens Advisory Committee, and Dignity Fund Oversight Committee.

- **Recommendation # 3: If the word limit prevents the digest from listing all of the commissions that will be retained and all that will be removed, substitute a balanced list of the most important commissions in each category.**

Modify the second bullet point in "The proposal" section with the following:

The Charter has 46 commissions. This amendment would remove from the charter 24 of those commissions including Public Health, Library, Human rights, Human Services, Arts, Environment, Small Business and Juvenile Probation. The amendment would retain 22 commissions, including Police, Fire, Recreation and Park, Municipal Transportation Agency, Public Utilities, Ethics and boards overseeing employee health benefits and retirement those overseeing the Port, Public Utilities, Airport, Municipal Transportation Agency, Civil Service, Planning, Fire, Police, Recreation and Park, Disability and Aging Services, Ethics, Elections, Board of Appeals, War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, City museums, City employee retirement and health benefits, redistricting, residential rent control, and garbage rates. The measure would also allow the City to retain commissions that federal or state law require.

- **Recommendation # 4: Be specific about the number of commissions which will be dissolved.**

Modify bullet point # 3 in "the Proposal" section to be specific about how many other commissions will be dissolved:

City and County of
San Francisco



Board of Supervisors,
President

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- Dissolve ~~all other~~ the remaining 108 commissions 16 months after the measure's effective date, subject to a process for the City to consider reauthorizing or restructuring nor more than 43 of them within the 65-commission limit. A five-member task force appointed by City officials would recommend within nine months of the measure's effective date which commissions the City should reauthorize or restructure. The Board could by ordinance reauthorize or restructure those commissions within the 16-month period to prevent them from dissolving. The Board could later reestablish commissions and create new commissions, subject to the 65-commission limit.
- **Recommendation # 5: Make clarifying changes in the "Yes vote means" section:**

A "YES" Vote Means: If you vote "yes," you want to limit the total number of commissions the City may have to 65 by eliminating 65 commissions, removing 25 and retaining 22 ~~decision-making~~ commissions, dissolve other commissions after 16 months unless the City chooses to retain or reauthorize them as advisory bodies, change how some commissioners are appointed, give the Mayor sole authority to appoint and remove City department heads, prohibit the City from providing commissioners compensation and health benefits and give the Police Chief sole authority to adopt rules governing police officers' conduct.

Thank you, as always, for your attention to this work and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Peskin".

Aaron