
Mayor's Disability Council



Sheri Albers
Alex Madrid
Co-Chairs

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Supervisor Aaron Peskin
San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Dear Supervisor Peskin,

We are writing to express our strong disagreement with the recommendation regarding the Mayor's Disability Council (MDC) in the Civil Grand Jury Report, "Commission Impossible: Getting the Most from San Francisco Commissions".

"Getting the most" from the MDC means understanding its purpose. The Report's recommendation suggests a poor grasp of the MDC's mission and the scope of the problems it addresses.

The MDC ensures a voice for one of San Francisco's largest marginalized communities. One in ten San Franciscans -- 96,000 residents -- report having a disability. Almost half of people with disabilities are under age 65. One in four people with disabilities live in poverty. Even adults with disabilities who are employed are more than twice as likely to experience poverty. 64% of residents with disabilities are people of color. [DAAS-
infographic-disability-2021-v5 \(sfhsa.org\)](https://www.sfhsa.org/infographic-disability-2021-v5)

People with disabilities are very diverse. We have different accessibility and service needs. There is no substitute for our lived experience...which should guide and inform the many departments and offices in San Francisco government that we often depend upon. Little in the Civil Grand Jury Report appears to value this lived experience. Especially because the City of San Francisco has very few employees with disabilities in policy positions, the real world experience of people with disabilities is vital for San Francisco to adequately serve a very large constituency.

The mission of the MDC is to bring our personal knowledge to San Francisco through

- Advising the Mayor and City Departments on disability issues
- Working with the Mayor's Office on Disability to ensure ADA Compliance
- Providing a public forum to discuss disability issues

In fact, the Civil Grand Jury report mistakenly describes the MDC's mission as:

"Recommends policies to improve coordination of care within different settings (home-based, community-based, and institutional care) and service sectors (health, supportive services, housing)." Page 60.

While inaccurately assuming that the purpose of the MDC involves "care," the Civil Grand Jury recommends that the MDC be abolished. In contrast, the Civil Grand Jury

does not recommend abolishing other boards and commissions focusing on marginalized communities

San Francisco can only benefit from hearing directly from the disability community. We are baffled by the apparent indifference to the specific needs of people who are historically ignored and underserved, and whose civil rights are too often thwarted. For decades, the disabled community has had to face such a lack of understanding of the severe challenges it faces, and has always been placed last. This is the situation which which the MDC aims to address and improve.

If the initiatives on the November ballot to reduce the number of boards and commissions are approved, there must be specific measures to counteract the bias against people with disabilities evident in this report. We hope that you will be open to meeting with us to explore how to protect and retain the role we have served.

Sincerely,

Alex Madrid
Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

Cc: Jennifer Johnston
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