October 9, 2026

Argemira Flores Feng, Chair
Yaman Salahi, Vice Chair
Commissioners David Tsai, Karen Bell Francois, Kevin Yeh

I was planning to attend your Commission meeting to speak on agenda item 4, the Executive Director's Report, Streamlining Legislation regarding campaign finance rules. However, since your meeting has been canceled, I am writing re-stating my opposition to raising the contribution limit for contributions to candidates for local office from $500 to $1000. As I said at your September 9, 2025 meeting I am opposed to this increase. I say again

Serving on the Ethics Commission, you are prohibited from participating in a local campaign. If you were not serving, I ask how many of you can/would make a $1000 contribution to a political campaign?

I have served as a volunteer treasurer since 2016 and regularly call supporters to donate to Board of Supervisors candidates and candidates for mayor. $500 is a hardship for most San Franciscans. Raising the donation limit to accommodate inflation is action in an imaginary world. Are voters knocking on Ethics Commission staff doors begging to be able to donate more than $500? NO. Only staff from lobbyist groups.

The contribution limit was part of a ballot measure passed by voters, Proposition O, The Fair Elections Ordinance. It was placed on the ballot by the Ethics Commision and in particular the late former Commissioner, retired Superior Court Judge Isabella Grant and Commissioner Paul Melbostad. It created partial public financing for eligible candidates for Board of Supervisors. I campaigned for passage of Proposition O because I was acutely aware of the importance of money in a candidate being able to deliver information to voters about their qualifications. Candidates who do not have personal wealth are tremendously disadvantaged.

I am troubled with the current situation where billionaires are spending huge amounts of money to influence election outcomes. Our current mayor's winning strategy was a blank check. Increasing the donation limit to $1000 serves no purpose except increasing public sentiment that politics are for the elite few.

As a reminder your "...mission is to practice and promote the highest standards of integrity in government. We achieve that by delivering impactful programs that promote fair, transparent, and accountable governmental decision making for the benefit of **all San Franciscans**.

Sincerely,

Esther Marks