
Mayor's Disability Council



Nicole Bohn
Director

Denise Senhaux
Co-Chairs

October 10, 2019

Dear Director Gerull:

Based on the public feedback that the Mayor's Disability Council (MDC) has received, we request that the City and County of San Francisco consider using available funding to research how the City can continue to improve election access for those with disabilities.

As you know, In July 2019, a community workshop was held to get public feedback about voting concerns, including open source voting. One of the primary concerns identified by participants in this forum was how to effectively integrate mandated accessibility guidelines for people with disabilities into our voting system development.

In addition to the open source voting accessibility concerns, the MDC has also heard about accessibility concerns pertaining to Remote Accessible Vote by Mail, which was implemented in San Francisco recently as part of mandated State legislation. Although the platform itself appears to meet current accessibility guidelines, there are still barriers to completing the voting process for people with disabilities using this method. Specifically, this process, while allowing some who have never had voting privacy to vote independently for the first time, still requires the voter to print, sign, and mail in a hard copy of their ballot. This can be especially difficult and often impractical for people with disabilities, especially those who are blind, low vision or who have certain physical or dexterity disabilities. The MDC recommends that the City research potential digital solutions to this problem.

For instance, incorporating a digital identity verification system with the current web based system could increase accessibility and voter participation among the 94,000 people with disabilities in San Francisco. Available funding can be used to research and report on methods, techniques, systems, and vendors that could provide a digital signature and identify verification maintain security, and improve accessibility.

We believe that this research will promote much needed full participation and inclusion for people with disabilities in San Francisco's voting process.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter, and please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions about this request.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denise Senhau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denise Senhau, Co-chair Mayors Disability Council

Cc: Department of Elections Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)
John Arntz, Director, Department of Elections
Nicole Bohn, Director, Mayor's Office on Disability
Jennifer Johnston, Office of the City Administrator