



2012-2013 YOUTH COMMISSION

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Memorandum of Support

May 20, 2013

To: Members of the New York State Senate,
Members of the New York State Assembly

Re: Amend the New York State Public Officers Law
(A02448- Rozic;S04142-Lanza) Would allow for
appointment of 16 and 17 year olds to New York City
Community Boards.

The San Francisco Youth Commission (www.sfgov.org/yc) enthusiastically supports amending New York State's Public Officer's Law to allow 16 and 17 year olds to serve on community boards and commissions. Our 17 person body, made up of youth ages 12-23, is living proof of the efficacy of youth empowerment and engagement. Since the Youth Commission was created as a chartered city commission in 1995, we have been instrumental in advising the local government on how to best serve young people.

Some of our policy accomplishments:

- Focusing the city's attention on the needs of underserved transitionally aged youth (16-24), leading to the creation of TAY SF
- Successfully advocating for a pilot program providing free transit passes for low and moderate income youth
- Bringing significant press and community attention to an unused recreation yard in Juvenile Hall, as well as the general need to provide outdoor exercise to youth detained there
- Working with community members to successfully urge the San Francisco Police Dept. not to use tasers

Not all youth will feel inspired to serve their community on a board or commission, but those who would like to dedicate their time should be allowed to apply. From our personal experience, we have seen the positive impact youth empowerment creates both within the government and within the youth themselves. Young people offer a valuable perspective and new energy to policymakers. They also benefit from learning about how civic processes work, how to present their opinions persuasively, and how to work with their peers and community members of diverse perspectives.

Policymakers benefit from advisory bodies that truly reflect the constituency which they are serving. Although youth may be under voting age, their insight is a valuable resource for legislators and government officials. The purpose of an advisory body or commission is to represent the larger community, which may not have the access or capacity to voice their needs. If there are youth attempting to bridge that gap, they should be considered. The diversity of perspectives and experiences reflected in government can only serve to increase the responsiveness of the policies created.

The work of the San Francisco Youth Commission provides over 15 years of evidence of the importance of youth voice in government, and we strongly urge you to take proven examples such as our organization into consideration when making your decision on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mia Shackelford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mia" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Shackelford".

Mia Shackelford, Chairwoman, San Francisco Youth Commission
& the 2012-2013 San Francisco Youth Commission