

1 [Urging Creation of a Youth Voice Policy]

2 **Resolution Urging the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and Youth-Serving City**
3 **Commissions to Support the Creation of a Youth Voice Policy.**

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5 WHEREAS, Public participation, and specifically youth participation, in local public hearings is
6 at the core of our democratic process and is essential for municipal government to work effectively;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The Ralph M. Brown Act ensures that meetings held by local agencies are open to
9 the public and that all members of the public have a meaningful opportunity to observe and take part in
10 the decision-making process of local governmental bodies¹; and

11 WHEREAS, Pursuant to section 54954.3 of the Brown Act, the public is guaranteed the right to
12 provide testimony at any regular or special meeting on any subject which will be considered by the
13 legislative body before or during its consideration of the item²; and

14 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors has a stated commitment to encouraging
15 public testimony before it takes action on municipal issues³; and

16 WHEREAS, The committee system of the Board of Supervisors is designed to hear effective
17 public testimony for and against proposed legislation before the specific committees and to hear
18 suggestions for amendments; and

19 WHEREAS, While in policy every meeting of the Board of Supervisors and City Commissions
20 are open to the public, in practice there exist structural barriers preventing the attendance and

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23 ¹ "Brown Act Pamphlet 2003." State of California Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General.
Accessed January 1, 2014. http://ag.ca.gov/publications/2003_Main_BrownAct.pdf.

24 ² "GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54950-54963." Official California Legislative Information. Accessed January
1, 2014. <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&group=54001-55000&file=54950-54963>.

25 ³ "Meeting Information Guide." San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Accessed January 1, 2014.
<http://www.sfbos.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=34252>.

1 participation of youth 18 years of age and younger and those within the education system – namely,
2 the scheduling of public hearings during regular school day hours; and

3 WHEREAS, Youth are typically underrepresented in municipal governments, and are unable to
4 participate in democratically electing public officials until age 18; and

5 WHEREAS, According to the Spring 2012 Youth Vote survey, 43% of surveyed SFUSD
6 students ‘don’t care at all’ about government and politics and 25% are only ‘a little interested’ about
7 government and politics⁴; and

8 WHEREAS, More opportunities to testify in front of public officials could increase youth
9 engagement in government and politics; and

10 WHEREAS, Youth civic engagement leads to reduced risky behavior, increased success in
11 school, and leads to greater civic participation later in life⁵; and

12 WHEREAS, At the March 6th, 2012 meeting of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation
13 Agency, of 37 speakers providing public comment starting just before 2:00 PM and ending at 3:42 PM
14 regarding the proposed “Free MUNI for Youth” Program, only two were youth⁶; and

15 WHEREAS, At the same meeting, of the 39 speakers providing public comment after 3:42 PM,
16 32 were youth⁷; and

17 WHEREAS, At a subsequent meeting of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
18 on April 17th, 2012 at 1:00 PM, of the 17 speakers providing public comment at the beginning of the
19 meeting on the proposed “Free MUNI for Youth” Program, one was a youth⁸; and

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21 ⁴ San Francisco Youth Empowerment Fund. "Spring 2012 YouthVote Student Survey." San Francisco Youth
22 Empowerment Fund. Accessed February 20, 2014. http://yefsf.org/S12survey_results.html.

23 ⁵ Grantmakers for Children, Youth, & Families. "Results-Based Public Policy Strategies for Promoting Youth
24 Civic Engagement." Grantmakers for Children, Youth, & Families. Accessed February 20, 2014.
<http://www.resourcelibrary.gcyf.org/node/3857>.

25 ⁶ "Municipal Transportation Agency - March 6th, 2012." SFGovTV. Accessed January 1, 2014.
http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=55&clip_id=14435.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ "Municipal Transportation Agency - April 17th, 2012." SFGovTV. Accessed January 1, 2014.
http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=55&clip_id=14872.

1 WHEREAS, As stated in section 54953.7 of the Brown Act, elected legislative bodies may
2 impose requirements upon themselves or on agencies under their jurisdiction which allow greater
3 access to their meetings than prescribed by the minimal standards set forth with the Act⁹; now
4 therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the San Francisco Board of
6 Supervisors and youth-serving City Commissions to affirm their commitment to ensuring that public
7 meetings are accessible to all children and youth of 18 years and younger and those within the
8 education system by making a reasonable effort to accommodate this population; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the San Francisco Board of
10 Supervisors and youth-serving City Commissions to adopt new guidelines for public meetings,
11 including a provision explicitly authorizing the Youth Commission to request hearings or discussions
12 on legislation referred to the Youth Commission according to Charter Section 4.124 to be scheduled at
13 an hour of the day that can accommodate youth, preferably at a start time no earlier than 4:00 PM on a
14 given day; and be it finally

15 RESOLVED, That should this policy be adopted by the Board of Supervisors and youth-serving
16 City Commissions, that the San Francisco Youth Commission shall be held accountable for
17 outreaching to increase youth participation at these public meetings.

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⁹ "GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54950-54963." Official California Legislative Information. Accessed January 1, 2014. <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=gov&group=54001-55000&file=54950-54963>.

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Nicholas Persky

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2013-2014 Youth Commission Chair
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