

1 [San Francisco Youth Commission Support of Richmond Youth Council's Recommendation to Lower  
2 the Municipal Voting Age]

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5 Supplemental Information

6 The Richmond Youth Council began considerations and investigations of the utility of lowering the  
7 municipal voting age in October 2015. Beginning in January 2016, they are preparing formal  
8 recommendations regarding lowering the voting age for the Richmond City Council. The San  
9 Francisco Youth Commission has done extensive investigation on the positive impacts these efforts  
10 would have on the civic participation of teens and young adults and we formally lend our support to the  
11 efforts of young people in our neighboring city to advance this important cause.

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13 In addition, we opt to submit the following letter of support to the Richmond Youth Council and  
14 Richmond City Council:

15 Honorable Richmond City Councilors:

16 We hope this letter finds you well. We are the San Francisco Youth Commission, a chartered  
17 commission established by voters in 1995, we are a group of young San Franciscans between the  
18 ages of twelve and twenty three appointed by the San Francisco Mayor and Board of Supervisors to  
19 advise them on local youth-related issues and Board legislation. We are writing to extend our support  
to the Richmond Youth Council's recommendation and efforts to lower the municipal voting age in  
Richmond to age 16.

20 The San Francisco Youth Commission has worked on this initiative since January 2015, after passing  
21 a resolution about lowering the voting age. On March 16, 2015, a charter amendment to allow 16 and  
22 17 year olds to participate in local elections was introduced before the Board of Supervisors and is  
23 currently being considered before its Rules Committee. Youth around San Francisco have worked to  
raise awareness on this issue and to gain support on both a local and national level. We are pleased  
that the efforts have been the source of not only local discussion and debate, but recent national press  
in *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Bloomberg News*.

24 Sixteen and seventeen year olds should be given the right to vote because we are both capable of  
25 exercising, and deserving of, a voice in the decisions affecting our daily lives. We already bear civic  
responsibilities, such as paying taxes, driving, and being able to be tried in adult courts. Extending the

1 right to vote to us is an investment in our civic development. It builds lifelong voters and engaged  
2 citizens. This initiative will involve young people more deeply in civic affairs and support us in voting for  
3 the first time in environments where we are most invested in local issues. A growing body of research,  
4 and the many examples of civic leadership among 16 and 17 year olds, show we are able to make  
5 independent choices in voting and critically analyze information to make informed decisions about  
6 issues facing our cities.

7 As young people, we have the most invested in issues like housing, transit, education, and violence  
8 prevention, but sadly voters ages 18-30 have the lowest voter turnout of any age group. We believe  
9 that allowing young people to vote on municipal issues for the first time while still in high school can  
10 change that.

11 We are writing to express our formal support of the Richmond Youth Council in their efforts to lower  
12 the voting age. We wish to extend our cooperation in helping them draft resolutions, speak to the  
13 Richmond Council, and raise awareness of the movement and the initiative's efforts in San Francisco,  
14 the greater Bay Area, and on a national-level through the VOTE16 USA Youth Advisory Board, on  
15 which Richmond youth councilors already sit.

16 We look forward to continued collaboration with both Richmond's youth and elected leaders on this  
17 important issue.

18 Sincerely,

19 The 2015-16 San Francisco Youth Commission

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*Luis Mula*

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Adopted on January 4, 2016