

July 17, 2018

Mayor and Members of the Long Beach City Council  
333 W. Ocean Blvd., 14th Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802

**RE: Comments Regarding Proposed Ethics Commission**

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of the Long Beach City Council,

We thank you for your efforts to improve the function and oversight of our local government by considering a Charter amendment to create an Ethics Commission. We respectfully submit this letter offering comments on item 18-0546, a proposed Charter amendment and ordinance to require the creation of an Ethics Commission comprised of Long Beach residents for the purpose of monitoring, administering, and enforcing governmental ethics laws in the City of Long Beach.

This proposed amendment is critically important to strengthening the community's belief and support in our government. An Ethics Commission in Long Beach would help further public trust and transparency in our local government, ensuring our governing structures operate according to acceptable ethical standards that are aligned with Long Beach values. Accordingly, we submit the following comments, which we hope can be incorporated into the proposal.

**1. Staffing and Financial Support**

The proposal as currently written does not include any information regarding the financial or staffing support the Ethics Commission will receive. This is concerning given the broad responsibilities this Commission is being given. Inadequate staffing and resources could impede effective implementation and oversight of ethics rules and potential violations. Other cities have dedicated budgets for their Ethics Commissions ranging from approximately \$300,000 to over \$2 million<sup>1</sup>. This illustrates the importance of dedicating staff and funds for a successful Commission. We urge the City Council to consider incorporating a minimum budget and staffing level into the proposal so that the Commission is not limited in its ability to fulfill its duties.

**2. Commission Make Up**

The proposed Charter amendment does not specify many details, beyond length of term and appointment by the Mayor. For example, it does not specify the size of the commission or a more detailed process for how potential commissioners will be identified and approved. Long Beach has an opportunity to create an appointment process that avoids partisanship and conflicts of interest, to identify qualified candidates with equity in mind. We urge the City Council

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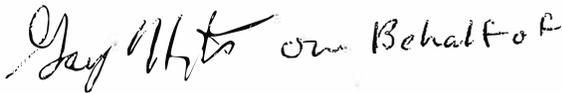
<sup>1</sup> In 2007 Oakland was at \$279,644, San Diego at \$1,021,106, Los Angeles is at \$2,600,000, and San Francisco is at \$1,382,441. ([https://www.ca-ilq.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources\\_Everyday\\_Ethics\\_Dec07\\_0.pdf](https://www.ca-ilq.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources_Everyday_Ethics_Dec07_0.pdf))

to consider other cities' appointment processes -- such as San Diego in particular<sup>2</sup> -- as they work to finalize this item.

### 3. Scope and Transparency

Given the importance of this Commission, it is critical to have a process by which public complaints and grievances can be filed with the Commission about potential ethical violations within the scope and jurisdiction of the body. We also want to stress the importance of providing greater clarity on the scope and powers of the Commission to investigate and/or subpoena additional information relating to an investigation or relevant administrative hearing.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposal, and look forward to collaborating on revisions related to the comments we have submitted today.

Respectfully,  on Behalf of

Amy Cabrera Rasmussen, California State University Long Beach\*

Christine Petit, Long Beach Forward\*

Gary Hyrek, Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community\*

Jorge Rivera, Long Beach Residents Empowered\*

Lian Cheun, Khmer Girls in Action\*

Robert Nothoff, Don't Waste Long Beach Coalition\*

Steve Gerhardt, Walk Long Beach\*

Víctor Sánchez, Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community\*

\* for identification purposes

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<sup>2</sup> Article 7: Elections, Campaign Finance and Lobbying Division 35: City of San Diego Ethics Ordinance "City of San Diego Ethics Ordinance" :<http://docs.sandiego.gov/municode/MuniCodeChapter02/Ch02Art07Division35.pdf>