



May 13, 2024

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
 Los Angeles City Hall
 200 N. Spring Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council President Krekorian and Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council,

We represent a broad coalition of organizations that includes labor unions and non-profits with members across the City of Los Angeles. We support policy proposals to create a more ethical, transparent and honorable city government in Los Angeles, as we know that the most vulnerable among us — immigrants, hourly workers, and city workers — are often victimized when powerful interests are able to unfairly influence City Hall.

However, we do not support the current Ethics Commission Charter reforms that are being considered by the City Council. Rather than increasing access and transparency, the proposed reforms would substantially limit the voices of Los Angeles' most vulnerable residents and constituency groups, and could open up a pandora's box of unintended consequences.

Specifically, we strongly oppose three components of the current proposal: 1) allowing the appointed commissioners to select additional members of the Ethics Commission, 2) the

arbitrary 120-day deadline for Council action on approved Ethics Commission policy recommendations, and 3) permitting the Ethics Commission to directly place items on the ballot when the elected City Council disagrees with their recommendations.

Angelenos deserve an accountable government. The Ethics Commission, made up of political appointees, is by nature unaccountable to the voters, and these proposals would further insulate them from any real accountability. The proposed recommendations erode a system of checks and balances that are necessary to strike a good balance between transparency, accountability, and good governance with full participation from the public. Allowing the appointed Ethics Commissioners to select and then vote in two additional members onto their own commission without any additional approval from the City Council creates a quasi-separate government agency that is accountable to no one, and one that is not subject to the checks and balances of Los Angeles' residents.

Second, good policy cannot be rushed. The elected policymakers on the City Council should not be forced to act on complex and meaningful policy changes proposed by an unelected body according to an arbitrary deadline. A cornerstone of good policymaking is to engage a multitude of constituency groups and provide them with the opportunity to vet any proposed policies, allow them to provide recommendations, and create iterative practices that allow conflicting points of view to arrive at an eventual consensus. A process like that takes time, and setting a self-imposed timeline to conclude such a process can lead to long-term unintended consequences for some impacted parties. The 120-day deadline proposal should be amended to allow the City Council the necessary time and all legislative tools to arrive at a proper policy decision.

Lastly, the unelected Ethics Commission should not be allowed to bypass the people's elected representatives and place items on the ballot when there is a disagreement over the Commission's proposed policy recommendations. Doing so shortchanges public discourse, incurs unnecessary costs to the City, and by nature, makes the Ethics Commission a political entity. Ceding authority to place measures directly on the ballot would also be an improper delegation of legislative power by the City Council that would run the risk of limiting – rather than encouraging – public participation.

In conclusion, we oppose these proposals in their current form because we must guard against unintended long-term consequences. The potential for undue financial burdens and legal risks that would silence vulnerable Angelenos, non-profit organizations, and union workers who advocate for fair, ethical policies, is something that we must act against. We respectfully request that the council amend sections 1 (b) and 1(o), and remove section 1 (c) from the Ethics Commission Reform recommendations in Council File 23-1027.

Sincerely,

Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
American Federation of Musicians, Local 47
California IATSE Council

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 11
International Longshore And Warehouse Union, Local 13
International Longshore And Warehouse Union, Local 56
Laborers' International Union of North America, Local 300
Los Angeles & Orange County Building & Construction Trades Council
Painters and Allied Trades, District Council 36
Service Employees International Union, Local 721
Service Employees International Union – United Service Workers West
Teamsters Joint Council 42
Teamsters Local 396
Teamsters Local 399
United Auto Workers Region 6
United Food & Commercial Workers, Local 770
UNITE HERE, Local 11
The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
It's Bigger Than Us
Korean Resource Center
Los Angeles Black Worker Center

Cc:

Mayor Karen Bass
Council President Paul Krekorian
President Pro Tempore Marqueece Harris-Dawson
Assistant President Pro Tempore Bob Blumenfield
Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez
Councilmember Nithya Raman
Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky
Councilmember Imelda Padilla
Councilmember Monica Rodriguez
Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr.
Councilmember Heather Hutt
Councilmember Traci Park
Councilmember John S. Lee
Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martínez
Councilmember Kevin De Leon
Councilmember Tim McOsker