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Internal Operations Committee
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
651 Pine Street, Room 101
Martinez, CA 94553

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Natalie Oleas and I am a former At-Large Commissioner with the Contra Costa Commission for Women. I resigned from my Commissioner position in July of 2017 due to concerns over the relationship between the Commission and the non-profit "Friends of the Contra Costa Commission for Women" (hereinafter "Friends").

The Commission's purpose, as stated in the by-laws, is "to educate the community and advise the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and other entities as necessary on issues relating to the changing social and economic conditions of women in the County."

During my time on the Commission, we held a handful of events that informed the community about the disparate impact women feel within the workforce and in school settings. We attempted to write advisory memos for the Board of Supervisors, but found that due to the poor public opinion of the Women's Commission within the county, we lacked the necessary contacts and support to adequately research for those memos. In November 2016, the Executive Committee and the Legislative Committee were tasked with updating the Commission's by-laws. As a member of both Committees, I began reviewing our by-laws and the Commission Handbook. After reviewing these documents, I had a better understanding of the original advisory role the Commission was created to fulfill and felt that the Commission was not meeting that requirement. I also grew concerned about the Friends involvement in the Commission's activities.

At the June 2017 Commission meeting, which was the last meeting I attended, the issue of the Commission's purpose was discussed. This discussion lead to a heated argument among the Commissioners over the Commission's need to distance itself from the Friends and focus on it's original purpose of being an advisory body. During that meeting, it became clear to me that a handful of influential commissioners felt maintaining the relationship between the Friends and the Commission was more important to than the original advisory purpose of the Commission. For this reason, I resigned from my role as At-Large Commissioner.

My decision to resign was not taken lightly. I fundamentally believe the Board of Supervisors needs an advisory body to raise it's awareness of the issues that disparately impact the women of this County. It is my hope that the Internal Operations Committee can complete it's investigation and re-establish a Women's Commission that truly acts in the manner in which it was intended. Should another Commission be created with these guidelines in place, I would very much like to serve as a Commissioner once again.

Sincerely,



Natalie Oleas, J.D.