To Whom it May Concern:

The National Youth Rights Association strongly endorses the Vote16SF campaign to lower the voting age in San Francisco. We believe lowering the voting age will be good for young people, good for San Francisco and good for democracy as a whole. NYRA urges passage of a lower voting age.

Our nation is based upon the principle of consent of the governed. 16 and 17 year olds are very much governed by our laws; they pay taxes, can be charged as adults for crimes and are affected by all the decisions made by our political leaders. Yet without the right to vote, youth have no ability to consent to these laws. This is as unjust now as it was when the concept of consent of the governed was written into the Declaration of Independence.

NYRA has fought to correct this injustice since we were founded in 1998. We have campaigned to lower the voting age from coast to coast, including in California. This isn't the first time San Francisco has taken up the issue of lowering the voting age. In 2005, our local chapter, NYRA-Berkeley, worked with the Board of Supervisors on the issue. On July 12, 2005, with a vote of 8 to 2, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution calling upon the California legislature to pass a bill expressly permitting California cities and counties to lower their local voting ages to 16.

It has been over a decade since that resolution has passed. The legislature hasn't taken action on this issue, but cities across the country have. Takoma Park & Hyattsville, MD both lowered their local voting ages in 2013 and 2015, without going through their state. We believe that San Francisco has waited long enough and should lower its voting age.

Lowering the voting age in Takoma Park & Hyattsville has invigorated their local democracies. Voter turnout is up, teens attend and participate in public meetings and debates, and young people feel more included in the communities they call home. As a democracy that prizes the consent of the governed, isn't this what we want to see everywhere? NYRA looks forward to seeing more communities see the benefits of a 16 year old voting age and calls upon the Board of Supervisors to support youth suffrage.

Sincerely,

Alex Koroknay-Palicz
President
National Youth Rights Association