

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 9



City and County of San Francisco

HILLARY RONEN

June 15, 2022

Dear Directors,

There are some wonderful things about this budget – not least of all being the 2-year labor contract with all the City’s incredible workers giving them a 10% raise over 2 years at a cost of \$170 million to the City. This was an important investment and I understand that it put strains on what else we can fund this year. I also want to thank you all and the Mayor over the last two years as we weathered a devastating global pandemic and now fight for an equitable recovery.

Having said that, there is a lot left out of this budget as well. This committee has an unprecedented \$1.3 billion dollar addback list. I have combed through the list and there is very little fluff. It mostly consists of requests for the basics. Basics like food. I drove past the Latino Resource Hub on my way to work today. This is the day the Hub distributes food. There was already a line of people with their carts going for at least 8 blocks, doubly wrapped around buildings. Distribution of the food doesn’t start for another 2 hours. Then driving down Van Ness, I saw a string of new tents on both sides of the street – I’ve never seen tents in these spots before. Is this because of the depressing hearings we had last night where three of our most important providers of housing and treatment for the poor, mentally ill, and disabled - PRC, Baker, & Laguna Honda - are in absolute crisis and on the brink of closure? The basic needs of San Francisco’s poor communities are not being met.

Also missing from this budget is support for homeless women, their children, and survivors of domestic violence. The health and resource hubs that have been instrumental in our fight against COVID-19 and a cost of doing business increase for our non-profit service providers in a time of high inflation. Are PRC and Baker just the first to come to the City for a bailout because they can’t make it without adequate support from the City?

For all of these reasons, I’ve instructed the BLA to be aggressive this year, so we can cut as much inefficiency and sometimes waste out of this budget and use the money to meet the basic needs of the people. I have asked the BLA to place specific emphasis on vacant positions that haven’t been filled in a while despite being funded. I am looking to save every penny we can so we can redirect those resources to people suffering in poverty and other critical priorities like the environment and quality education of our kids.

I want to implore all Department Heads to work with the Budget & Legislative Analyst (BLA) who will propose cuts to your budgets because I promise you that they will be easier to work with than this committee. The BLA is looking at your budgets through a lens of good government and efficiencies. We will be looking at your line items and will be thinking about hungry seniors, trapped in their buildings because the elevators do not work. We will be thinking of the children standing next to their mother who is buying stolen meat at the 24th St. Bart station because she can’t afford food at the store. And I’m not exaggerating. I’ve talked to several of my colleagues that like me are having trouble sleeping because of the horror stories we hear every day.

Do everything you can to reach an agreement with the BLA. If you do not, next week, we will be considering your budget last in line and we will scrutinize every detail even more closely.

I am sorry if I sound harsh. I truly appreciate all you do so much, and I know how difficult it is to run these large departments and produce results. You have been instrumental in getting our City through this worldwide pandemic. But it is not over. San Franciscans continue to suffer greatly and have a ton of needs. This committee does this work with that reality constantly in the back of our minds.

Thank you for listening and I hope to have the smoothest Budget process possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Ronen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hillary Ronen
Supervisor, District 9