FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 17 2019

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Board Unanimously Passes Greatest Expansion of Public Financing in Two Decades  
Grassroots, small-dollar donors’ impact will be amplified under new legislation by Supervisor Gordon Mar

San Francisco - Today, the Board of Supervisors unanimously passed legislation by Supervisor Gordon Mar to significantly expand the City’s public financing program for elections.

“We know that the path to a more responsive government and a fairer, more just future is through a stronger democracy. With our democratic norms under assault in 2019, it’s never been more important to do the work to strengthen our democracy,” said Mar. “Public officials should be accountable to the public, and this accountability must start with how we are elected. Public financing of elections allows candidates to compete in campaigns increasingly flooded with private funds from SuperPACs, it amplifies the voice of our constituents, and it provides greater regulation and accountability for those who seek office”

The legislation, also known as Public Financing 2.0, represents the single greatest expansion of our public financing program since it was created by voters in 2000, modernizing and bringing the program further in its goals. It increases the amount of public funds available to qualified candidates, increases the matching ratio from 2:1 to 6:1, while limiting the matchable portion of a contribution to $150.

Together, the reforms will significantly amplify the overall impact of the program, while specifically amplifying the impact of grassroots, small dollar donations from individuals.

It also increases the initial individual expenditure ceiling by the same amount as the increase in public funds, and cleans up inconsistencies in the code on fundraising periods and reporting thresholds.
“While these reforms are blocked on the federal level, we can’t wait for Washington to start the essential work of strengthening our Democracy,” said Mar. “It falls upon cities to lead, and that’s what we’re doing.”

Prior to Tuesday’s vote, the ordinance received unanimous support from the San Francisco Ethics Commission, endorsements from the ACLU, the Brennan Center for Justice, Common Cause, the Campaign Legal Center and Fair Vote California, and was co-sponsored by Supervisors Ahsha Safai, Sandra Lee Fewer, Hillary Ronen, Rafael Mandelman, and Matt Haney. It will be voted on again next week for final approval, and if finally approved, go into effect ahead of the 2020 elections.

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