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Prepared Remarks for

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**Announcing Actions Challenging the Termination of
Accreditation for City College of San Francisco**

**City Attorney's Conference Room
San Francisco City Hall**

[INTRODUCTION]

Good morning.

I'm happy to be joined by my chief deputy, Terry Stewart, along with Deputy City Attorneys Sara Eisenberg, Tom Lakritz and Yvonne Mere. All are working closely with me on the actions we're here to discuss.

I'm announcing today that I have filed dual legal challenges involving the termination of City College of San Francisco's accreditation.

My intentions in filing these actions are two-fold:

- **First, to enjoin private accreditors from effectively closing a cherished public institution — which has been a cornerstone of economic opportunity and educational promise for generations of San Franciscans.**

- **And second, to require the state governing board actually charged *by statute* with evaluating college standards, and eligibility for public funding, to reclaim its duties — exactly as the legislature intended.**

[ACCJC ACTION]

The first action is a lawsuit against the private Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, or ACCJC.

This complaint, which follows many weeks of investigation by my office, charges the private agency with unlawfully allowing its advocacy and bias to prejudice its evaluation of college accreditation standards.

It is a matter of public record that the ACCJC has been a leading advocate to dramatically reshape the mission of California’s community colleges.

It is also well-known that the commission favors more restrictive policies that focus on degree completion — a “junior college” model — to the detriment of...

- **The abiding “open access” mission pursued by California’s Community College system for decades**
- **And also repeatedly affirmed by the state legislature.**

“Open access” has also long been embraced by San Francisco voters — and, by extension, our own Community College District, since it was first established.

The vision of “open access” is to make sure education serves those who intend to pursue four-year degrees — and *also*...

- **Underserved and disadvantaged students who would benefit from remedial coursework**
- **Under- and unemployed adults who seek new job skills**
- **Seniors, disabled students, and new parents**
- **Immigrants learning English as a second language**

- **And other non-traditional learners.**

Now, we should have no problem with the *right* of others to advocate an agenda at odds with the “open access” vision — as conservative advocates have done. And as interests representing for-profit colleges and student lenders have also done.

But we *should* have a problem when an entity charged with impartial evaluation engages in political advocacy — as the ACCJC has done.

There are very good reasons why judges should not be advocates. And why advocates should not be judges. The evidence is compelling in the civil complaint I’ve filed in San Francisco Superior Court this morning that the ACCJC did both.

In doing so, accreditors acted improperly to withdraw accreditation...

- **“...in retaliation for City College having embraced and advocated a different vision for California’s community colleges than the ACCJC itself.”**

Taken together with multiple conflicts of interest, improper evaluation processes, and politically motivated decision-making, the accrediting commission’s actions constitute illegal business practices under California law.

[BOG ACTION]

The second action I’ve filed today is a legal challenge and rulemaking petition with the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. The Board of Governors is the public agency charged by statute with overseeing our state’s 112 community colleges, and 72 community college districts. Its public duties include setting accreditation standards, and determining eligibility for public funding.

Yet despite the legislature’s intent — as clearly evidenced by California statute — the Board of Governors improperly ceded its *public* duties to a wholly unaccountable *private* entity in the ACCJC.

In doing so, the state board gave rise to the unlawful actions detailed in both the legal challenges I’ve filed today.

[CONCLUSION]

Now, I want to be absolutely unequivocal about a couple of points.

- **Nothing about the actions I’ve filed today should distract or delay City College of San Francisco from doing everything in its power to *so/ve* the problems threatening its survival.**
- **But neither should these steps tempt the ACCJC to consider — for even one moment — retaliating against City College for legitimate challenges to accreditors’ conduct and authority under the law.**

I'm not City College's lawyer. I am acting in my independent authority as City Attorney, and also as a public prosecutor empowered to act on behalf of the People of the State of California in these kinds of cases.

Here, the evidence is clear that the ACCJC ignored multiple conflicts of interest, flouted state and federal laws, and allowed its political advocacy to color public responsibilities it should frankly never have been given.

For this, the State Board of Governors is also to blame for unlawfully ceding its public duties to a private entity wholly beyond the reach of public accountability.

Though I seek to enjoin the ACCJC from improperly terminating City College's accreditation, the issues raised by both actions go far beyond any single college alone.

The accreditation process involving City College has exposed bias, institutional flaws and illegalities in the oversight of the nation's largest higher education system. It potentially affects 72 community college districts, 112 community colleges, and more than 2 million students in California.

These issues are serious. They are statewide. And they merit rigorous scrutiny.

I'm happy to take your questions.