Dear Democratic Executive Board,

I am writing in response to a letter sent by the leadership of the Environmental Democratic Club in opposition to the chartering of the South Bay Youth Democratic Clubs. I had the pleasure of working with members of the South Bay Youth Democratic Clubs from 2008 – 2012 in my role of South County GO Team Coordinator. I also volunteered for GOTV at the South County Office in 2014, 2016 and 2018, and observed the efforts of the youth clubs in all these election cycles.

In 2008, I saw the efforts put in by the democratic youth clubs from Castle Park High, Hilltop Highschool and Southwestern College, as they worked to elect Marty Block to State Senate, Pamela Bensoussan to City Council and Jose Preciado to Waterboard, and helped make a Spanish language phone bank for Barak Obama for President the largest in the nation. In 2010, Hilltop High School Democrats, and Castle Park High School Dems, assisted in electing Ben Hueso to Senate, Juan Vargas to Congress and Nick Segura to Schoolboard. In 2012 Chula Vista High School Democrats, Hilltop Highschool Democrats, Montgomery High School Dems, Castle Park High School Dems and Southwestern College Democrats worked to re-elect Barack Obama, Ben Hueso and Juan Vargas, and elect Mary Salas Mayor.

In 2014, Chula Vista High School Democrats, Hilltop Highschool Democrats, Castle Park High School Democrats, Montgomery Highschool Dems, Bonita High School Dems and San Ysidro High School Dems worked to elect Mona Rios, re-elect Mary Salas and Patricia Aguilar. In 2016, Democratic clubs from Chula Vista Highschool, Hilltop High School, Castle Park High School, Montgomery High School, Hoover High School, Eastlake Highschool, Otay Ranch High School, Olympian High School and Southwestern College, worked to elect Steve Padilla to City Council, Barbara Bry to City Council, and re-elect Ben Hueso to State Assembly. In 2018, these same clubs, now fully chartered, worked to elect Jill Galvez to City Council, Leticia Cazares, as well as on behalf of Mark Bartlett for City Council.

I can testify to the efforts that the youth clubs in the South Bay put in to each election cycle. They showed up in groups of twenty, every afternoon, after class, for the entire month leading up to the election. By GOTV weekend, each year, and each cycle, there would be over seventy-five students volunteering from different high schools.

It may be argued that the efforts of the South Bay youth democratic clubs prior to 2018 are irrelevant, because they were not yet charted. I would argue that they are relevant precisely for this reason. These historic efforts show that these clubs are not newly formed, nor were they formed with an internal political power purpose. They are long standing youth organizations that have been to great benefit to the party over a period of a decade. Given that these clubs have been as active, if not far more active, as other democratic clubs, in every election cycle for over a decade, it seems gravely unfair to disenfranchise these youth organizers. And I believe it would be a very unfortunate, and significant, loss to the party if the youth clubs enthusiasm and involvement were to diminish because of perception of disenfranchisement or lack of recognition of their organization and efforts.

I am aware of the proposed requirements that are being asked of the South Bay Young Democrats to charter in the letter from the Environmental Democratic club leadership. The proposed requirements appear reasonable enough to warrant further discussion –require that bylaws and dues requirements be made public, public posting of agendas and minutes, to require that clubs only hold a certain number of joint meetings per year, to require that endorsement meetings be held individually, not in a joint meeting, or that clubs maintain a webpage with updated upcoming meeting calendars.
However, I do believe that it would be unfair to hold only these clubs to these standards, or to deny them their charter for not meeting these requirements already, when such requirements were not published nor required in advance, nor required of other clubs. **All clubs, including these clubs, who met the current requirements for chartering, should be chartered at the next central committee meeting.** We cannot have a moving goal post, based on club chartering regulations that have yet to be formally proposed.

If additional rules and standards are going to be placed on clubs, they need to be made uniformly of all clubs, and all clubs need to be uniformly given a reasonable amount of time to come into compliance.

It would be grossly unfair to make these rules apply only to the youth clubs, or to deny a youth club a charter because they were not already following rules and standards that are being created after the fact, with the blatant purpose of denying them charter.

**There also needs to be reasonable considerations made for the constraints of youths.** A minor, coming from the South Bay, is far less likely to have transportation to attend a Council of Clubs meeting, held in Clairemont on a Saturday. They are also far more likely to need guidance in how to organize a meeting, and prepare documents, hence why document templates were prepared for these clubs by their advisors, giving them a similar look and feel. They are also far less likely to have the monetary means and/or credit cards necessary to pay club dues, hence why dues for multiple clubs would be paid by the same club advisor. Many of these apparent irregularities, as seen by adults, are not due to nefarious manipulation, but the limits and constraints that young people face in terms of organizational skills, financial systems access, and transportation.

There is consternation that these clubs have been organized under the same advisor. But it is precisely because there was an advisor, Andrea Cardenas, who has worked voluntarily, for years, to involve these youth, that this unprecedented level of youth involvement and youth organization has been possible in the South Bay, unparalleled anywhere else in the county, and possibly the entire state. These efforts should be applauded, supported, and duplicated, not undermined.

If additional chartering requirements are created for all clubs, I would recommend this body do so with caution. Because while it is of the upmost importance that we maintain the integrity of our clubs, we must be conscientious of the bureaucratic burden that we put on club leaderships. Many democratic clubs, not just the South Bay Young Dems Clubs, struggle to comply with the organizational requirements as they exist today. **To create higher standards for clubs, will affect the ability of many groups to organize, and could effectively create barriers to clubs whose leadership consists of those with greater time constraints** – not just youth, but working parents and single parents, and effectively give more representation to clubs whose leadership consist of those with the greatest time to meet such requirements – affluent retirees and single adults, groups that are already overrepresented in our party structure today.

I hope that this body will proceed thoughtfully and in a manner that will lead to greater inclusion and leadership development, not less.

Thank You,
Cynara Velazquez
Former GO Team Coordinator for the South Bay
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P.S. Attached are some pictures I found of the South Bay Young Democratic Clubs in action, from my time volunteering with them.