

April 12, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

Richard C. Miadich, Chair
Fair Political Practices Commission
1102 Q Street, Suite 3000
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: Comment Letter Regarding April FPPC Agenda Item 4; College of the Canyons Foundation

Dear Chair Miadich:

The Network of California Community College Foundations (“NCCCCF”) and Foundation for California Community Colleges (“FoundationCCC”) offer these comments regarding FPPC Agenda Item 4, which lists as a Respondent the Foundation for the College of the Canyons (“Canyons Foundation”). The FoundationCCC is the official nonprofit auxiliary organization associated with the California Community Colleges’ Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office. The NCCCCF is a network of college foundation leaders serving nearly 100 of our colleges and districts across California. The College of the Canyons is a community college district, and the Canyons Foundation is an auxiliary organization explicitly associated with the College of the Canyons District.

Community college foundations are ubiquitous throughout the community college system, providing funding for scholarships, student support services, specialized programs for the district’s general benefit, and supporting community college infrastructure development. One of the most effective ways to support infrastructure development is to support ballot measures that help finance college facilities. These foundations are most often organized under the California Education Code as auxiliary organizations by a community college district’s governing board or an independent community-based nonprofit organization. Without these foundations, the ability of community colleges to function would be limited.

It came to our attention that, at a previous hearing, the FPPC had questions regarding the authority of an auxiliary organization to contribute to ballot measure campaigns. We offer this letter to help provide clarity on the point. Auxiliary organizations and independent nonprofits are permitted under state law to contribute their unrestricted funds to a ballot measure campaign committee established to advocate voter approval for bond measures placed on the ballot by a community college district. 88 Ops.Cal. Atty.Gen. 46 (2005). Additionally, in the Stipulation, Decision, and Order for the agenda item referenced above, “(FPPC’s) Enforcement Division found that the (Canyons) Foundation permissibly made the contributions using available private nondonor funds.”

We hope you will recognize the tremendous benefits provided by community college foundations. We also hope you will recognize that making campaign contributions to support specific ballot measures by our foundations is a small but necessary and legally permissible part of our work.

We are happy to offer our assistance to you in reaching out to other community college foundations to educate them about the Political Reform Act requirements. All community college foundations wish to comply fully with all legal requirements and would welcome any effort to partner with the FPPC to educate and ensure compliance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Geoff Green, CEO of the Santa Barbara City College Foundation
President, Board of Directors of the Network of California Community College Foundations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keetha Mills". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a prominent initial "K".

Keetha Mills
President and CEO of the Foundation for California Community Colleges