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JS-6

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION
BUREAU,

 Petitioner,

 vs.

FUTURE INCOME PAYMENTS, LLC,

 Respondent.

CASE NO. SACV 17-00303-JLS (SSx)

**ORDER (1) GRANTING THE
CONSUMER FINANCIAL
PROTECTION BUREAU’S PETITION
TO ENFORCE CIVIL
INVESTIGATIVE DEMAND AND (2)
DENYING FUTURE INCOME
PAYMENTS’ MOTION TO STAY
CASE (Docs. 1, 27)**

1 Before the Court is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s (CFPB) Petition to
2 Enforce Civil Investigative Demand. (Pet., Doc. 1.) Respondent Future Income Payments,
3 LLC filed an Opposition (Opp’n, Doc. 26), and the CFPB replied (Reply, Doc. 28). Also
4 before the Court is Future Income Payments’ Motion to Stay Case. (Mot., Doc. 27; Opp’n,
5 Doc. 39; Reply, Doc. 44.) For the following reasons, the Court GRANTS the CFPB’s
6 Petition and DENIES Future Income Payments’ Motion to Stay Case.

7 **I. BACKGROUND**

8 In the past few years, the income stream market has come under sharp scrutiny for
9 allegedly marketing loans at undisclosed, exorbitant interest rates to vulnerable
10 populations, including veterans and the elderly. *See John Doe Co. v. CFPB*, 849 F.3d
11 1129, 1130 (D.C. Cir. 2017); U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., GAO-14-420, Pension
12 Advance Transactions: Questionable Business Practices Identified (2014),
13 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/663800.pdf>. Like several other purchasers and sellers of
14 income streams, Future Income Payments has been the subject of investigations by state
15 regulators in New York, California, Massachusetts, Iowa, Washington, and North
16 Carolina. (*See* N.Y. Consent Order, Exh. 4, Doc. 29-4; C.A. Stip. Desist and Refrain
17 Order, Exh. 5, Doc. 29-5; C.A. Desist and Refrain Order, Doc. 29-6; Mass. Press Release,
18 Exh. 7, Doc. 29-7; Iowa Assurance of Voluntary Compliance, Exh. 8, Doc. 29-8; Wash.
19 Consent Order, Exh. 9, Doc. 29-9; N.C. Settlement Agreement, Exh. 10, Doc. 29-10.) In
20 February 2017, the City of Los Angeles filed suit against Future Income Payments,
21 alleging that the company charges usurious, hidden interest rates as high as ninety-six
22 percent, prohibits early termination of the loans (thereby ensuring that consumers cannot
23 avoid the high interest rates), and employs abusive collection practices. (City of Los
24 Angeles Compl. ¶¶ 2-4, Exh. 11, Doc. 29-11.)

25 On November 23, 2016, the CFPB served this Civil Investigative Demand on
26 Future Income Payments, demanding information related to the company’s income-
27 stream-advance transactions. (*See* CID at 2-5, Exh. A, Doc. 5.) The CFPB explained
28 that the purpose of its investigation was:

1 to determine whether financial-services companies or other persons have
2 engaged or are engaging in unlawful acts and practices in connection with
3 offering or providing extensions of credit or financial advisory services
4 related to transactions involving pensions, annuities, settlements, or other
5 future-income streams in violation of §§ 1031 and 1036 of the Consumer
6 Financial Protection Act of 2010, 12 U.S.C. §§ 5531, 5536, or any other
7 Federal consumer-financial law. The purpose of this investigation is also to
8 determine whether Bureau action to obtain legal or equitable relief would be
9 in the public interest.

10 (CID at 1, Exh. A.) The CFPB's nine interrogatories, two requests for written reports, and
11 ten requests for documents seek information regarding Future Income Payments' structure,
12 investors, marketing, business relationships, bank accounts, collection efforts, financial
13 records, involvement in other government investigations, and income-stream-advance
14 transactions. (*See id.* at 2-5.)

15 Future Income Payments submitted a petition to set aside the CID on December 13,
16 2016, which the CFPB denied on January 5, 2017. (Hartmann Decl. ¶¶ 5-6, Doc. 4.) Four
17 days later, Future Income Payments filed suit in the United States District Court for the
18 District of Columbia to enjoin the CFPB from taking any adverse action against it and to
19 allow the company to proceed anonymously. (*Id.* ¶ 10.) The district court denied Future
20 Income Payments' request to prohibit the CFPB from taking any action against the
21 company but enjoined the agency from naming it in any public filing until March 3, 2017.
22 (Order, Exh. A, Doc. 4.) On March 3, the D.C. Circuit denied Future Income Payment's
23 request for an emergency stay pending appeal. *See John Doe Co.*, 849 F.3d 1129.

24 The CFPB filed this Petition to Enforce the Civil Investigative Demand under seal on
25 February 21, 2017. (Pet.) After the district court's injunction lapsed in *John Doe Co.*, the
26 Court unsealed this action and issued a revised briefing schedule. (Order, Doc. 21.)

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1 **II. DISCUSSION**

2 To determine whether to enforce an administrative subpoena, a court considers “[1]
3 whether Congress has granted the authority to investigate; [2] whether procedural
4 requirements have been followed; and [3] whether the evidence is relevant and material to
5 the investigation.” *EEOC v. Children’s Hosp. Med. Ctr. of N. Cal.*, 719 F.2d 1426, 1428
6 (9th Cir. 1983) (en banc), *overruled on other grounds as recognized in Prudential Ins. Co.*
7 *v. Lai*, 42 F.3d 1299, 1303 (9th Cir. 1994). If the agency has satisfied these prerequisites,
8 “the subpoena should be enforced unless the party being investigated proves the inquiry is
9 unreasonable because it is overbroad or unduly burdensome.” *Children’s Hosp. Med. Ctr.*
10 *of N. Cal.*, 719 F.2d at 1428. A subpoenaed party is also free to raise any constitutional
11 challenges to the CFPB’s authority to issue a CID, which this Court reviews on a plenary
12 basis. 12 U.S.C. §§ 5562(e), (h)(1); *John Doe Co.*, 849 F.3d at 1131.

13 Future Income Payments contends that the CID should not be enforced because (1)
14 the CFPB is structurally unconstitutional, (2) the CID seeks information outside of the
15 CFPB’s jurisdiction, and (3) the CID is overbroad. (*See generally* Opp’n.) Under the
16 doctrine of constitutional avoidance, the Court first considers whether Future Income
17 Payments’ statutory arguments have merit before turning to its constitutional challenge.

18 **A. CFPB’s Jurisdiction**

19 A party cannot defeat enforcement of an administrative subpoena by raising fact-
20 bound challenges related to “coverage or compliance with the law.” *EEOC v. Karuk Tribe*
21 *Hous. Auth.*, 260 F.3d 1071, 1076 (9th Cir. 2001); *see also Endicott Johnson Corp. v.*
22 *Perkins*, 317 U.S. 501, 508-09 (1943). This Circuit has recognized a narrow exception to
23 this rule for “jurisdictional” challenges, but even then a court’s inquiry focuses solely on
24 whether “there is some ‘plausible’ ground for jurisdiction.” *Karuk Tribe Hous. Auth.*, 260
25 F.3d at 1077 (citation omitted). In other words, as long as the agency’s jurisdiction is not
26 “plainly lacking,” a court should enforce an administrative subpoena, even if the
27 respondent raises a reasonable argument that the subpoena is beyond an agency’s statutory
28 mandate. *Id.*; *see also CFPB v. Great Plains Lending, LLC*, 846 F.3d 1049, 1051, 1058

1 (9th Cir. 2017) (applying the “plainly lacking” standard to a CID issued by the CFPB).
2 The “plainly lacking” standard is necessarily a low bar to avoid tasking courts and parties
3 with resolving complex hypotheticals before an agency even decides whether to take an
4 enforcement action.

5 Much of the Ninth Circuit’s jurisprudence applying this “jurisdictional” exception
6 involves Native American tribes’ challenges to whether they should be considered
7 “persons” under various statutes. *See, e.g., Great Plains Lending, LLC*, 846 F.3d at 1053
8 (whether a tribe is a “person” under the Consumer Financial Protection Act); *NLRB v.*
9 *Chapa De Indian Health Program, Inc.*, 316 F.3d 995, 998 (9th Cir. 2003) (National Labor
10 Relations Act); *Karuk Tribe Hous. Auth.*, 260 F.3d at 1077 (Occupational Safety and
11 Health Act). In *Karuk Tribe Housing Authority*, the Ninth Circuit concluded that a Native
12 American tribe’s challenge to the EEOC’s authority was jurisdictional and the agency’s
13 authority was plainly lacking. *Id.* at 1077-78, 1083. *Karuk Tribe Housing Authority*
14 contrasted the tribe’s argument that the Age Discrimination in Employment Act simply did
15 not apply to tribal governments with other cases where “the subpoenaed parties could,
16 *under some set of facts*, be found in violation of federal law” *Id.* at 1078 (emphasis
17 added). By contrast, in *Children’s Hospital Medical Center of Northern California*, the
18 Ninth Circuit sitting *en banc* held that a *res judicata* defense did not warrant denying
19 enforcement of an administrative subpoena. 719 F.2d at 1427-30. Although the
20 subpoenaed party’s *res judicata* argument raised “an important[] and . . . difficult question
21 . . . worthy of serious consideration,” a party cannot avoid complying with an
22 administrative subpoena based on “what normally would be a defense to an action by the
23 agency.” *Id.* at 1427. Even if the *res judicata* defense could be construed as jurisdictional,
24 the *en banc* court noted that the EEOC’s jurisdiction was not “plainly lacking,”
25 considering how unsettled the law was regarding the preclusive effects of prior class
26 actions on subsequent class claims. *Id.* at 1430.

27 Future Income Payments posits that the CFPB lacks jurisdiction because the
28 company’s future-income streams are not a consumer financial product or service. (Opp’n

1 at 17-18.) Although couched as a challenge to the CFPB’s jurisdiction, this argument
2 really invites a fact-intensive inquiry into whether the company’s products qualify as loans
3 under the Truth in Lending Act. Because Future Income Payment’s challenge concerns the
4 “coverage” of the applicable consumer financial statutes and the company’s compliance
5 with the law, it cannot raise this issue to prevent enforcement of the CFPB’s administrative
6 subpoena. *See Children’s Hosp. Med. Ctr. of N. Cal.*, 719 F.2d at 1429; *Endicott Johnson*
7 *Corp.*, 317 U.S. at 508-09. Even assuming *arguendo* that Future Income Payments’
8 challenge implicates the CFPB’s jurisdiction, the two unpublished district court decisions
9 that the company relies on hardly establish that the agency’s jurisdiction in “plainly
10 lacking.” (*See* Opp’n at 18 (citing *Capela v. J.G. Wentworth, LLC*, No. CV09-882
11 SJF/WDW, 2009 WL 3128003, at *9-10 (E.D.N.Y. Sept. 24, 2009); *Reed v. Val-Chris*
12 *Investments, Inc.*, No. 11CV371 BEN WMC, 2011 WL 6028001, at *2-3 (S.D. Cal. Dec.
13 5, 2011).) Not only do those cases involve different transactions (specifically, a certain
14 structured settlement and an assignment), but at least six state regulators and the City of
15 Los Angeles have found that Future Income Payments’ products *do* constitute loans. (*See*
16 *generally* N.Y. Consent Order, Exh. 4, Doc. 29-4; Stip. Desist and Refrain Order, Exh. 5,
17 Doc. 29-5; C.A. Desist and Refrain Order, Doc. 29-6; Mass. Press Release, Exh. 7, Doc.
18 29-7; Iowa Assurance of Voluntary Compliance, Exh. 8, Doc. 29-8; Wash. Consent Order,
19 Exh. 9, Doc. 29-9; N.C. Settlement Agreement, Doc. 29-10; City of Los Angeles Compl.,
20 Exh. 11, Doc. 29-11.) Suffice to say, the CFPB has “some ‘plausible’ ground for
21 jurisdiction” over Future Income Payments’ income-stream-advance transactions. *See*
22 *Karuk Tribe Hous. Auth.*, 260 F.3d at 1077 (citation omitted).

23 **B. Scope of the CID**

24 Future Income Payments next argues that the CID seeks information outside Future
25 Income Payments’ possession, custody, or control; is temporally overbroad; seeks
26 irrelevant information; and imposes an undue burden on the company. (*See* Opp’n at 19-
27 25.) None of these arguments are persuasive.

28

1 **1. Possession, Custody, or Control**

2 Relying on the CID’s definition of “Company,” “you,” and “your” and its definition
3 of “affiliate,” Future Income Payments contends that the CID “is overly broad to the extent
4 it seeks documents from other companies who may share a common owner with FIP, but
5 have no relation whatsoever to the stated purpose in the CID.” (Opp’n at 20-22.)

6 The CID defines “Company,” “you,” and “your” as:

7 Future Income Payments, LLC, formerly known as Pensions, Annuities and
8 Settlements, LLC, any successor in interest, and any parent companies, wholly
9 or partially owned subsidiaries, unincorporated divisions, joint ventures,
10 operations under assumed names, and affiliates, and all principals, directors,
11 officers, owners, employees, agents, representatives, consultants, attorneys,
12 accountants, independent contractors, and other persons working for or on
13 behalf of the foregoing.

14 (CID Def. E, Exh. A.) Read purely in isolation, this definition could conceivably be
15 construed to request information outside of Future Income Payments’ possession, custody,
16 or control. But Instruction I clarifies that “[t]his CID covers materials and information *in*
17 *your possession, custody, or control*, including but not limited to documents in the
18 possession, custody, or control of your attorneys, accountants, other agents or consultants,
19 directors, officers and employees.” (CID Inst. I, Exh. A. (emphasis added).) In keeping
20 with traditional principles of agency law, a principal-agent relationship or a contractual
21 right is sufficient to establish “control.” *See, e.g., St. Jude Med. S.C., Inc. v. Janssen-*
22 *Counotte*, 104 F. Supp. 3d 1150, 1159 (D. Or. 2015); *Allen v. Woodford*, No.
23 *CVF051104OWWLJO*, 2007 WL 309945, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 30, 2007); *Rosie D. v.*
24 *Romney*, 256 F. Supp. 2d 115, 119 (D. Mass. 2003); *see also* Restatement (Third) of
25 Agency § 8.11 (2006) (“An agent has a duty to use reasonable effort to provide the
26 principal with facts that the agent knows, has reason to know, or should know when . . .
27 subject to any manifestation by the principal, the agent knows or has reason to know that
28 the principal would wish to have the facts or the facts are material to the agent’s duties to

1 the principal . . .”). Thus, properly construed, the CID does not seek—nor will this Court
2 require—Future Income Payments to produce documents outside its possession, custody,
3 or control.

4 Conversely, as long as the information that the CFPB seeks is responsive and within
5 Future Income Payments’ possession, custody, or control, it is properly within the scope of
6 the CID. As the CFPB notes, Future Income Payments may operate through a complex
7 web of legal entities. (Reply at 19-20.) A consent decree Future Income Payments entered
8 with the New York State Department of Financial Services in October 2016 reveals that
9 Future Income Payments has at least three marketing affiliates—Cash Flow Investment
10 Partners, LLC, BuySellAnnuity, Inc., and Pension Advance, LLC—that operate out of the
11 company’s address in Irvine, California. (N.Y. Consent Order at 2-3, Exh. 4.) The CFPB
12 also points to the City of Los Angeles’ contention that Future Income Payments’ owner
13 and manager, Scott Kohn, “operate[s] his pension loan and investment scheme” through a
14 “web of entities,” including Future Income Payments, LLC; BuySell Annuity, Inc.; Cash
15 Flow Investment Partners, LLC (a Delaware LLC); Cash Flow Investment Partners LLC (a
16 California LLC); Pension Advance LLC; PAS California, LLC; and London Square
17 Specialty Services, LLC. (Reply at 19; City of Los Angeles Compl. ¶¶ 7-9, Exh. 11.) The
18 CFPB convincingly argues that, to avoid Future Income Payments potentially evading
19 compliance with the CID through this network of legal entities, the administrative
20 subpoena must sweep broadly to include information held by the persons and entities
21 identified in the CID’s definition of “Company,” “you,” or “your,” insofar as that
22 information is within Future Income Payments’ possession, custody, or control. (Reply at
23 19-20.)

24 Future Income Payments arguments to the contrary are unavailing. The company
25 does not identify a single legal entity that would be subject to the CID that does not have
26 information relevant “to the stated purpose of the CID.” (*See* Opp’n at 20.) And limiting
27 the scope of the CID, as Future Income Payments proposes, to “FIP and any of its
28 predecessors and successors, relating to lending or financial advisory services involving

1 the purchase of future income streams” (*see* Opp’n at 17-18) would potentially result in the
2 company producing nothing because it claims that it does not offer any consumer financial
3 products or services.

4 **2. Temporal Scope of the CID**

5 Future Income Payments claims that the CID is temporally overbroad because the
6 “Applicable Period for Responsive Materials” extends from “December 1, 2011 until the
7 date of full and complete compliance with this CID.” (CID Inst. C, Exh. A.) The
8 applicable period, the company argues, should be narrowed to December 1, 2013 to align
9 with the applicable statute of limitations.

10 Future Income Payments’ argument is incorrect in two respects. First, the statute of
11 limitations provided in 12 U.S.C. § 5564 commences upon “the date of discovery of the
12 violation to which an action relates.” 12 U.S.C. § 5564(g). So, even if this statute of
13 limitations would apply to an enforcement action taken by CFPB (and not all enforcement
14 actions are subject to this limitations period), Future Income Payments’ argument assumes
15 that the CFPB knew all along of the company’s potential violations of the consumer
16 financial protection laws. Second, the standard for determining whether the temporal
17 scope of a CID is proper “is whether such information is relevant to conduct for which
18 liability can be imposed.” *CFPB v. Harbour Portfolio Advisors, LLC*, No. 16-14183, 2017
19 WL 631914, at *5 (E.D. Mich. Feb. 16, 2017); *see also NLRB v. Line*, 50 F.3d 311, 314-15
20 (5th Cir. 1995) (affirming enforcement of an administrative subpoena extending five years
21 back when the applicable statute of limitations was six months); *F.T.C. v. Texaco, Inc.*,
22 555 F.2d 862, 882 (D.C. Cir. 1977). Thus, even assuming that the only actionable conduct
23 occurred within the past three years, the CFPB may properly demand information for an
24 additional two years because this information is reasonably relevant to conduct occurring
25 within the statute of limitations period. *See Line*, 50 F.3d at 314-15.

26 **3. Relevance of the Information Sought**

27 Future Income Payments also contends that the CID seeks irrelevant information.
28 (Opp’n at 23-24.) The only examples the company identifies, however, are Interrogatory

1 No. 5 and Request for Written Report No. 1. (*See id.*) These requests seek Future Income
2 Payments' financial data "relating to income-stream-advance transactions" and bank
3 accounts "held in the name of or for the benefit of the Company." (CID Rpt. 1, Exh. A,
4 Intrg. 5, Exh. A.) Contrary to Future Income Payments' argument, the company's gross
5 revenue, expenses, and net profit from income-stream-advance transactions are highly
6 relevant to whether it or other entities have engaged in illegal practices "related to
7 transactions involving pensions, annuities, settlements or other future-income streams" and
8 whether an enforcement action "would be in the public interest." (CID at 1, Exh. A.) In
9 determining whether to take an enforcement action, an agency may consider the scale of
10 the potential violations and the defendant's profit from these actions. Likewise, Future
11 Income Payments' bank information will help the CFPB determine whether the company
12 uses a complex web of legal entities to operate.

13 **4. Undue Burden**

14 Finally, Future Income Payments asserts that complying with the CID would
15 impose an undue, or "extreme" burden on the company. (Opp'n at 24-25.) The company
16 may have waived this argument by failing to raise it during the administrative meet-and-
17 confer process or in its administrative appeal. *See N. Plains Res. Council, Inc. v. Surface*
18 *Transp. Bd.*, 668 F.3d 1067, 1081 (9th Cir. 2011) ("A party waives arguments that are not
19 raised during the administrative process."); *see also* 12 C.F.R. § 1080.6(c)(3). But even
20 considering the argument on its merits, Future Income Payments has failed to demonstrate
21 that the CID "is overbroad or unduly burdensome." *See Children's Hosp. Med. Ctr. of N.*
22 *Cal.*, 719 F.2d at 1428 (noting that the party opposing enforcement bears the burden of
23 showing that compliance would impose an undue burden). To show that an administrative
24 subpoena imposes an undue burden, a subpoenaed party cannot merely point to an
25 agency's "extensive" requests or assert that compliance would be costly. *See, e.g., FDIC*
26 *v. Garner*, 126 F.3d 1138, 1145-46 (9th Cir. 1997); *NLRB v. Vista Del Sol Health Servs.,*
27 *Inc.*, 40 F. Supp. 3d 1238, 1265-66 (C.D. Cal. 2014); *CFTC v. Ekasala*, 62 F. Supp. 3d 88,
28 94 (D.D.C. 2014). Instead, the party opposing enforcement must supply evidence

1 establishing that compliance “threatens to unduly disrupt or seriously hinder normal
2 operations of a business.” *Texaco*, 555 F.2d at 882; *see Ekasala*, 62 F. Supp. 3d at 94
3 (“The standard for showing that a request is unduly burdensome . . . is a high one.”).

4 The only concrete example Future Income Payments provides to support its undue
5 burden argument is that the agency seeks “all” of certain types of documents, such as its
6 agreements with consumers. (Opp’n at 24-25.) These requests, Future Income Payments
7 contends, should be limited to “documents sufficient to show’ a particular practice.”
8 (Opp’n at 24.) But crucially absent from Future Income Payment’s Opposition is any
9 evidence showing that the administrative subpoena imposes an undue burden, such as a
10 declaration specifying the estimated cost of compliance, the effect of compliance on Future
11 Income Payments’ operations, the number of responsive documents, or some other
12 indication of the burden of complying. Future Income Payments’ bald assertions that
13 compliance would result in “significant business consequences” do not establish an undue
14 burden. (*See* Opp’n at 24-25.) Besides, the CFPB’s requests are proportionate to the
15 potential scale of the violations at issue in this investigation. *See Garner*, 126 F.3d at
16 1146.

17 In sum, the CFPB’s CID is appropriate in scope and duration, seeks only relevant
18 information, and does not impose an undue burden on Future Income Payments.

19 **C. CFPB’s Constitutionality**

20 Because none of Future Income Payments’ other arguments have merit, the Court
21 must turn to the company’s constitutional challenges. For the following reasons, the Court
22 finds that the CFPB Director’s for-cause protection from removal is constitutional, and,
23 even if the agency were unconstitutionally structured, the enforcement of a subpoena
24 issued by the agency would not be unconstitutional.

25 **1. The CFPB’s For-Cause Removal Protection Does Not Violate the**
26 **Constitution.**

27 The Take Care Clause provides that the President “shall take Care that the Laws be
28 faithfully executed” U.S. Const. art. II, § 3. The Supreme Court has construed this

1 “simple but delphic” provision, along with the Vesting and Appointments Clauses, as
2 circumscribing Congress’s ability to impose restrictions on the President’s authority to
3 remove executive officials. Jack Goldsmith & John F. Manning, *The Protean Take Care*
4 *Clause*, 164 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1835, 1836-37 (2016).

5 In *Myers v. United States*, the Supreme Court held that a statute barring the
6 President from removing the Postmaster General unless the President secured the advice
7 and consent of the Senate impermissibly usurped the President’s executive authority. 272
8 U.S. 52, 107, 176 (1926). *Myers*’s seemingly expansive holding, however, was
9 substantially narrowed less than ten years later in *Humphrey’s Executor v. United States*,
10 295 U.S. 602 (1935). There, the Court affirmed the constitutionality of the Federal Trade
11 Commission Act’s for-cause removal provision, which provided that the President could
12 remove FTC commissioners only “for inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in
13 office.” *Id.* at 620. The President, the Court held, has no “illimitable power” to remove
14 officers charged with running “quasi legislative or quasi judicial agencies.” *Id.* at 629. To
15 the contrary, Congress may require these administrative agencies “to act in discharge of
16 their duties independently of executive control,” and “that authority includes, as an
17 appropriate incident, power to fix the period during which they shall continue, and to
18 forbid their removal except for cause in the meantime.” *Id.*

19 Though *Humphrey’s Executor* distinguished *Myers* as addressing a “purely
20 executive” office, the Supreme Court has since recognized that the inquiry cannot be
21 reduced to whether the role is “purely executive” or holds some “quasi-judicial” or “quasi-
22 legislative” characteristics. *Morrison v. Olson*, 487 U.S. 654, 689 (1988). As the Supreme
23 Court has observed, the “the powers of the FTC at the time of *Humphrey’s Executor* would
24 at the present time be considered ‘executive,’ at least to some degree,” and many
25 government functions cannot be neatly classified as “quasi-legislative” or “purely
26 executive.” *Id.* at 689 n.28. The guiding question instead is whether an officer’s for-cause
27 removal protection “interfere[s] with the President’s exercise of the ‘executive power’ and
28 his constitutionally appointed duty to ‘take care that the laws be faithfully executed’ under

1 Article II.” *Id.* at 690. Thus, Congress can establish, for instance, an independent
2 prosecutor who can be removed only for “good cause.” *Id.* at 692-93. But Congress
3 cannot insulate officers behind two levels of for-cause protection from removal because
4 such a “diffusion of accountability” unduly interferes with “the President’s ‘constitutional
5 obligation to ensure the faithful execution of the laws.’” *Free Enter. Fund v. Pub. Co.*
6 *Accounting Oversight Bd.*, 561 U.S. 477, 484, 497 (2010) (quoting *Morrison*, 487 U.S. at
7 693).

8 The CFPB executes essentially the same responsibilities that the FTC did at the
9 time of *Humphrey’s Executor*. Like the FTC in 1935, the CFPB has the power to conduct
10 administrative adjudications, bring civil enforcement proceedings, promulgate regulations,
11 conduct public investigations, and issue reports on its findings. *Compare* 12 U.S.C. §§
12 5511-12, 5532, 5534, 5562-64 with Federal Trade Commission Act, H.R. 15613, 63d
13 Cong, 38 Stat. 717 §§ 5-6, 9-10 (1914). The CFPB is headed by a Director, who serves a
14 five-year term upon appointment by the President and confirmation by the Senate. 12
15 U.S.C. §§ 5491(b)(1), (2). The CFPB’s Director may be removed only for “inefficiency,
16 neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office,” *id.* § 5491(c)(3), the same degree of protection
17 afforded to FTC commissioners.

18 In *CFPB v. Morgan Drexen, Inc.*, this Court held that the CFPB Director’s for-
19 cause removal protection “when considered as a part of the CFPB’s overall structure and
20 mission, does not impermissibly interfere with the President’s power to assure that the
21 laws be faithfully executed.” 60 F. Supp. 3d 1082, 1088 (C.D. Cal. 2014). The CFPB’s
22 authority closely parallels the FTC’s powers considered in *Humphrey’s Executor*. That the
23 FTC was (and still is) run by a five-member commission, while the CFPB has a director
24 makes no constitutional difference. *Id.* at 1087-88. *Humphrey’s Executor* did not
25 distinguish *Myers* based on the agencies’ different leadership structure—and with good
26 reason: To revamp a five-member board like the FTC, the President “would have been
27 required to affect five separate for cause removals, while only one is required in order to
28 change the leadership of the CFPB.” *Id.* at 1088. Further, compared to the CFPB

1 Director’s five-year term, the President’s authority over the FTC is more circumscribed
2 because its commissioners serve staggered, seven-year terms. *Id.* at 1088 n.3. Thus, if the
3 proper inquiry is whether the for-cause removal protection afforded to the CFPB Director
4 interferes with the President’s duty “to take care that the laws are faithfully executed,”
5 *Morrison*, 487 U.S. at 690, the CFPB’s structure is at least as constitutionally sound as the
6 FTC. *Morgan Drexen*, 60 F. Supp. 3d at 1088. And, in any event, there is no textual basis
7 in the Constitution for concluding that independent agencies must be led by multimember
8 commissions. *See id.* at 1092.

9 Future Income Payments argues that this Court’s decision in *Morgan Drexen*
10 deserves reconsideration because “courts . . . have agreed since October 2016 that the
11 Bureau is structurally unconstitutional.” (Opp’n. at 8 (capitalization removed).) What
12 Future Income Payments portrays as a wall of precedent is a vacated 2-1 decision, *PHH*
13 *Corp. v. CFPB*, 839 F.3d 1 (D.C. Cir. 2016), *reh’g en banc granted, order vacated* (Feb.
14 16, 2017), and a district court decision following *PHH Corp.*, *see CFPB v. Fomichev*, No.
15 2:16-cv-2724 (C.D. Cal. Nov. 17, 2016) (Doc. 40).

16 As an initial matter, the *PHH* majority acknowledged that “there is no meaningful
17 difference in responsiveness and accountability to the President” between an agency
18 headed by a commission and a director. 839 F.3d at 32. That is enough to end the inquiry.
19 Under the Supreme Court’s precedent, a for-cause removal provision does not offend the
20 Constitution unless it “interfere[s] with the President’s exercise of the ‘executive power’
21 and his constitutionally appointed duty to ‘take care that the laws be faithfully executed’
22 under Article II.” *Morrison*, 487 U.S. at 690. *PHH* omits any reference to this holding
23 from *Morrison*, relies heavily on the dissent in that decision, and quotes law review articles
24 calling *Humphrey’s Executor* “egregious” and “[r]emarkabl[e].” 839 F.3d at 34 n.15. The
25 Supreme Court’s decisions, however, “remain binding precedent until [it] see[s] fit to
26 reconsider them, regardless of whether subsequent cases have raised doubts about their
27 continuing vitality.” *Bosse v. Oklahoma*, 137 S. Ct. 1, 2 (2016) (quoting *Hohn v. United*
28 *States*, 524 U.S. 236, 253 (1998)).

1 In *PHH*, the panel majority declared the CFPB Director’s for-cause removal
2 protection unconstitutional based on two propositions: First, that the purported lack of
3 historical precedent for the CFPB directorship’s for-cause protection from removal
4 doomed its constitutionality, and, second, that “multi-member independent agencies are
5 superior to single-Director independent agencies in preventing arbitrary decisionmaking
6 and abuse of power, and thereby protecting individual liberty.” *See* 839 F.3d at 21-30.
7 Neither is persuasive.

8 There are at least three other active government agencies that share the CFPB’s
9 structure: the Social Security Administration, the Office of Special Counsel, and the
10 Federal Housing Financial Agency (which oversees Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and eleven
11 Federal Home Loan Banks). *See* 5 U.S.C. § 1211(b) (Office of Special Counsel); 12
12 U.S.C. § 4512(b)(2) (Federal Housing Finance Agency); 42 U.S.C. § 902(a)(3) (Social
13 Security Administration). A fourth director-led agency, the Office of the Comptroller of
14 the Currency, likely enjoys for-cause protection from removal as well. 12 U.S.C. § 2
15 (requiring the President to “communicate[]” “reasons” for removal of the Comptroller to
16 the Senate); 44 U.S.C. § 3502(5) (including the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
17 among the agencies listed in the definition of an “independent regulatory agency”). More
18 fundamentally, the distinction *PHH* drew between multimember boards and directors is
19 overly simplistic: Many independent agencies headed by multimember bodies have
20 “chairs” that, by statute or practice, wield substantial control over the agency’s
21 decisionmaking. *See* Marshall J. Breger & Gary J. Edles, *Established by Practice: The*
22 *Theory and Operation of Independent Federal Agencies*, 52 Admin. L. Rev. 1111, 1177-78
23 (2000) (concluding that in some independent agencies headed by multimember boards,
24 “the combination of political prestige and managerial authority accord . . . agency
25 chairmen the power to dominate and control their agencies’ agendas”). For instance,
26 though the Federal Reserve has a Board of Governors, the Federal Reserve Chair wields
27 considerable influence over rate-making and bank oversight, such that her statements can
28 move markets. *See* Tony Caporale & Kevin B. Grier, *A Political Model of Monetary*

1 *Policy with Application to the Real Fed Funds Rate*, 41 J.L. & Econ. 409, 422-23 (1998)
2 (observing that empirical evidence shows that “changes in the identity of the Fed chair
3 significantly change monetary policy”).

4 *PHH* attempted to distinguish the Social Security Administration as a direct
5 analogue by observing that the agency lacked “law enforcement” authority. 839 F.3d at
6 19. Yet *PHH* does not explain why the CFPB’s civil enforcement authority implicates
7 “the core of the executive power” any more than the Social Security Administration’s
8 power to determine benefits for millions. *See id.* Staffed with more than 65,000 federal
9 employees and responsible for a budget of over 1 *trillion* dollars, the Social Security
10 Administration handles “5.7 million retirement, survivors, and Medicare claims; over 2.8
11 million Social Security and SSI initial disability claims; and nearly 216,000 SSI aged
12 claims.” *See* Social Security Admin., FY 2017 Budget Overview 1, 3 (2016)
13 <https://www.ssa.gov/budget/FY17Files/2017BO.pdf>. As *Morrison* observed, the difficulty
14 with identifying “core” executive functions is that the same duties may seem “executive”
15 in certain circumstances and “legislative” or “judicial” in others. *See* 487 U.S. at 689 n.28
16 (noting the tension in what duties *Bowsher v. Synar*, *Buckley v. Valeo*, and *Humphrey’s*
17 *Executor* characterized as “judicial,” “legislative,” “executive,” or “administrative”).

18 Even if there were no direct precedent to the CFPB, “[o]ur constitutional principles
19 of separated powers are not violated . . . by mere anomaly or innovation.” *Mistretta v.*
20 *United States*, 488 U.S. 361, 385 (1989). To state an obvious but important point,
21 “[e]verything is new the first time it is enacted, and many different kinds of laws are not
22 similar to laws that were enacted in the first several sessions of Congress.” Leah M.
23 Litman, *Debunking Anti-Novelty*, 66 Duke L. Rev. 1407, 1459-65 (2017) (cataloguing the
24 ways in which federal institutions have grown more complex or confronted new
25 challenges). As our economy, society, and scientific knowledge have developed, Congress
26 has endeavored to craft new institutions to tackle the challenges that modern society
27 presents. If novelty alone were the proper measure of a statute’s lawfulness, Congress
28 would be powerless to fashion any modern administrative agency, much less one with the

1 for-cause removal protection sanctioned in *Humphrey's Executor*. See William H. Hardie
2 III, Note, *The Independent Agency After Bowsher v. Synar-Alive and Kicking*, 40 Vand. L.
3 Rev. 903, 906–07 (1987) (observing that the Interstate Commerce Commission, created in
4 1887, represented the first federal agency charged exclusively with regulating a particular
5 industry and, with its combination of rulemaking, adjudicatory, and enforcement authority,
6 became the “model for the modern administrative agency”).

7 Nor is there any guarantee that multimember bodies will better protect individual
8 liberty “by preventing arbitrary decisionmaking and abuse of power.” See *PHH*, 839 F.3d
9 at 25-30. Though *PHH* portrays multimember independent agencies as objectively
10 superior to those led by a director, there are many potentially competing trade-offs and no
11 empirical evidence that establishes the superiority of either. In theory, commissions are
12 thought to be more deliberative while director-led organizations are considered more
13 nimble. See, e.g., Rachel E. Barkow, *Insulating Agencies: Avoiding Capture Through*
14 *Institutional Design*, 89 Tex. L. Rev. 15, 37-38, 71 n.319 (2010). These characteristics do
15 not translate neatly into greater (or lesser) accountability: A commission, for instance, may
16 be less responsive to the Executive or the public due to internal divisions or sheer
17 sluggishness. For the same reason, the effect (if any) of an independent agency’s
18 leadership structure on the risk of capture by industry remains unknown. *PHH* also
19 focuses principally on the differences between *independent* commissions and *independent*
20 directorships. If—as *PHH* urges—agencies should be structured to avoid the improper
21 exercise of “law enforcement” authority, many would reason that either an independent
22 commission or an independent directorship would be preferable to an agency fully exposed
23 to political winds. See, e.g., David M. Driesen, *Firing U.S. Attorneys: An Essay*, 60
24 Admin. L. Rev. 707, 711 (2008).

25 Moreover, Congress devised many tools, some novel, to ensure the CFPB remains
26 accountable. Unlike other financial regulators, the CFPB undergoes annual audits by the
27 Government Accountability Office, 12 U.S.C. § 5496a, and has a capped budget from the
28 Federal Reserve System, *id.* § 5497. See Adam J. Levitin, *The Consumer Financial*

1 *Protection Bureau: An Introduction*, 32 Rev. Banking & Fin. L. 321, 343 (2013). Besides
2 judicial review under the Administrative Procedure Act and the Small Business Regulatory
3 Enforcement Fairness Act, CFPB’s rules may be stayed or overridden by the Financial
4 Stability Oversight Council, 12 U.S.C. § 5513. The agency has no authority to bring
5 criminal prosecutions, *see id.* § 5566, and has only limited authority to represent itself
6 before the Supreme Court, *id.* § 5564(e). The CFPB must submit extensive semi-annual
7 reports to Congress and the President that detail, among other activities, any anticipated
8 rulemaking or orders. *Id.* § 5496; *see* Michael S. Barr, Comment, *Accountability and*
9 *Independence in Financial Regulation: Checks and Balances, Public Engagement, and*
10 *Other Innovations*, 78 Law & Contemp. Probs. 119, 126 (2015) (asserting that the
11 architects of the CFPB, including the author, created an “extensive array of reporting
12 requirements [to] . . . force[] the Bureau to demonstrate to Congress on a continuous basis
13 that it is working to accomplish its mission”). In addition, Congress required the CFPB to
14 establish a system to provide timely responses “to complaints against, or inquiries
15 concerning” providers of consumer financial products. 12 U.S.C. § 5534.

16 At bottom, whether to structure an independent agency as a multimember or
17 director-led body depends on the proper weighing of the advantages and drawbacks of
18 each structure. But neither the text of the Constitution nor any Supreme Court precedent
19 supports drawing a constitutional distinction between multimember and director-led
20 independent agencies, so the question is properly reserved for the political branches and
21 the democratic process.

22 **2. Even if the CFPB Director’s For-Cause Removal Protection Were**
23 **Unconstitutional, the CID Should Be Enforced.**

24 Even if the CFPB Director’s statutory protection from removal were
25 unconstitutional under *PHH*’s reasoning, the CFPB’s administrative subpoena should
26 nevertheless be enforced. For Future Income Payments to defeat enforcement of the CID
27 based on the agency’s structure, the company “would have to show that only the Executive
28 Branch can demand information from regulated businesses or take such investigative

1 steps.” *John Doe Co.*, 849 F.3d at 1133. Yet every precedent from the Supreme Court
2 suggests otherwise. *See id.* Congress unquestionably has the authority to issue subpoenas.
3 *See, e.g., Eastland v. U. S. Servicemen’s Fund*, 421 U.S. 491, 504 (1975). And in *Buckley*
4 *v. Valeo*, the Supreme Court, although striking down the process for appointing
5 commissioners to the Federal Election Commission, stressed that “[i]nsofar as the powers
6 confided in the Commission are essentially of an investigative and informative nature there
7 can be no question that the Commission as presently constituted may exercise them.” 424
8 U.S. 1, 137 (1976). Indeed, Congress has granted every director-run independent agency
9 the power to issue administrative subpoenas. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 1212(b)(2) (Office of Special
10 Counsel); 12 U.S.C. § 4641 (Federal Housing Finance Agency); 42 U.S.C. § 405(d)
11 (Social Security Administration); *see also* 12 U.S.C. § 481 (providing that OCC bank
12 examiners “shall have power to make a thorough examination”). A finding that the CFPB
13 cannot exercise the subpoena power would logically preclude these other agencies from
14 exercising their statutory authority as well. Thus, even if the CFPB Director’s for-cause
15 removal protection violates separation-of-powers principles, the agency could still lawfully
16 exercise the subpoena power against Future Income Payments.

17 **D. Request for a Stay**

18 Separately, Future Income Payments seeks a stay of this case pending the resolution
19 of the request for an interlocutory appeal in *CFPB v. CashCall* and the *en banc*
20 proceedings in *PHH Corp. v. CFPB*. (Stay Mot. at 1, Doc. 27.) After Future Income
21 Payments filed its Motion, the Ninth Circuit denied interlocutory review in *CashCall*.
22 (Ninth Circuit Order, Exh. 4, Doc. 39-5.) As for staying this case pending the resolution of
23 *PHH Corp.*, the Court finds a stay unwarranted for the reasons identified below.

24 In determining whether to exercise its inherent authority to stay a case, a court
25 should weigh three salient considerations:

26 [1] the possible damage which may result from the granting of a stay, [2] the
27 hardship or inequity which a party may suffer in being required to go forward,
28 and [3] the orderly course of justice measured in terms of the simplifying or

1 complicating of issues, proof, and questions of law which could be expected
2 to result from a stay.
3 *CMAX, Inc. v. Hall*, 300 F.2d 265, 268 (9th Cir. 1962). Under the first factor, “the Court
4 begins with the reasonable assumption that a stay—while not ‘invariably improper or
5 inappropriate’—‘inherently increases the risk that witnesses’ memories will fade and
6 evidence will become stale.’” *Brenner v. Procter & Gamble Co.*, No. SACV 16-1093-JLS-
7 JCGX, 2016 WL 8192946, at *10 (C.D. Cal. Oct. 20, 2016) (quoting *Blue Cross & Blue*
8 *Shield of Alabama v. Unity Outpatient Surgery Ctr., Inc.*, 490 F.3d 718, 724 (9th Cir.
9 2007)). This concern carries particular force when a stay would impede a government
10 investigation. *See John Doe Co. v. CFPB*, No. CV 17-0049 (RC), 2017 WL 663528, at *7
11 (D.D.C. Feb. 17, 2017) (observing that “the public has a strong interest in the vigorous
12 enforcement of consumer protection laws”); *FTC v. Sequoia One, LLC*, No. 2:15-CV-
13 01512-JCM-CWH, 2015 WL 9462082, at *4 (D. Nev. Dec. 23, 2015). Future Income
14 Payments, therefore, bears the burden of demonstrating a “clear case of hardship or
15 inequity” under the other two factors. *Brenner*, 2016 WL 8192946, at *10 (quoting *Landis*
16 *v. N. Am. Co.*, 299 U.S. 248, 255 (1936)).

17 The DC Circuit and a district court have already rejected Future Income Payments’
18 claims that having to participate in a government investigation that the company believes to
19 transgress separation-of-powers principles constitutes irreparable harm. *See John Doe Co.*,
20 849 F.3d at 1135 (rebuffing Future Income Payments’ position that “any alleged
21 separation-of-powers injury is by its very nature irreparable”); *John Doe Co.*, 2017 WL
22 663528, at *6 (same). Similarly, in *Tilton v. SEC*, a challenge to the constitutionality of the
23 appointment of administrative law judges in the SEC, the Second Circuit held that “being
24 subjected to an unconstitutional administrative process” and enduring the “expense and
25 disruption” of these proceedings do not qualify as irreparable harm. 824 F.3d 276, 286 (2d
26 Cir. 2016); *see FTC v. Standard Oil Co. of Cal.*, 449 U.S. 232, 244 (1980) (holding that the
27 “expense and disruption” of defending oneself in “protracted adjudicatory proceedings” do
28 not amount not irreparable harm). Future Income Payments’ averred injury proves even

1 less compelling than those in *Tilton* because the CFPB has not brought an enforcement
2 action against it; absent a stay, Future Income Payments simply must comply with an
3 administrative subpoena. And, for the reasons articulated already, Future Income
4 Payments is particularly unlikely to defeat enforcement of the CID based on its separation-
5 of-powers challenge because the Executive Branch does not retain exclusive control over
6 the subpoena power. *See Buckley*, 424 U.S. at 137. Accordingly, Future Income Payments
7 would not incur substantial prejudice from having to comply with the administrative
8 subpoena.

9 Most importantly, Future Income Payments has not articulated clearly what purpose
10 would be served by granting a stay. The Ninth Circuit has denied interlocutory review in
11 *CashCall*. (Ninth Circuit Order, Exh. 4.) While others may seek interlocutory review on
12 the CFPB's constitutionality, the Court cannot hold this CID in perpetual limbo pending an
13 interlocutory appeal that the Ninth Circuit may never grant. As for the *en banc*
14 proceedings in *PHH*, any decision by the DC Circuit would be only persuasive authority,
15 and the DC Circuit may very well elect, under the doctrine of constitutional avoidance, not
16 to reach the constitution question pressed by the parties. The DC Circuit and district court
17 in Future Income Payments' parallel *John Doe Co.* suit have recognized that the
18 company's constitutional challenge should be resolved in this proceeding, or—if the CFPB
19 ultimately elects to take such action—in an enforcement action. *John Doe Co.*, 849 F.3d at
20 1134; *John Doe Co.*, 2017 WL 663528, at *6.

21 In short, any prejudice Future Income Payments would incur absent a stay and the
22 hypothetical possibility of further appellate guidance do not justify the substantial prejudice
23 that a stay would inflict on this government investigation. Accordingly, Future Income
24 Payments' Motion to Stay Case is DENIED.

25 **III. CONCLUSION**

26 The CFPB's Petition to Enforce the Civil Investigative Demand is GRANTED, and
27 Future Income Payments' Motion to Stay Case is DENIED. Future Income Payments is
28 hereby ORDERED to comply with the CID within fifteen days of this Order or at a later

1 date as may be established by the CFPB or the Court.

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4 DATED: May 17, 2017

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HON. JOSEPHINE L. STATON
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE