

# Accumulating hints for flavor-violating Higgs bosons at the electroweak scale

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We show that supplementing the Standard Model by only a second Higgs doublet, a combined explanation of  $h \rightarrow e\tau$ ,  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$ ,  $b \rightarrow s\ell^+\ell^-$ , the  $W$  mass and  $R(D^{(*)})$  as well as the excess in  $t \rightarrow bH^+(130 \text{ GeV}) \rightarrow b\bar{b}c$  is possible. While this requires flavor violating couplings, the stringent bounds from, e.g.,  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$ ,  $\tau \rightarrow \mu\gamma$ ,  $B_s - \bar{B}_s$  mixing,  $b \rightarrow s\gamma$ , low mass dijet, and  $pp \rightarrow H^+H^- \rightarrow \tau^+\tau^-\nu\bar{\nu}$  searches can be avoided. However, the model is very constrained; it inevitably predicts a shift in the SM Higgs coupling strength to tau leptons as well as a nonzero  $t \rightarrow hc$  rate, as indeed preferred by recent measurements. We study three benchmark points providing such a simultaneous explanation and calculate their predictions, including collider signatures which can be tested with upcoming LHC run-3 data.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Standard Model (SM) describes the known fundamental constituents of matter and their interactions at subatomic scales. It has been extensively tested and verified by a plethora of measurements [1] and the discovery of the Brout-Englert-Higgs boson [2–5] at the LHC [6,7], which has, in fact, properties [8–11] in agreement with the SM expectations, provided its last missing puzzle piece. However, these results do not exclude the existence of additional scalars, if the SM-Higgs signal strengths are not significantly altered (i.e. the mixing with the new scalars is sufficiently small) and their contribution to the  $\rho$  parameter ( $\rho = m_Z^2 \cos^2 \theta_W / m_W^2$ ) does not violate the experimental bounds. In fact, several indirect and direct hints suggest the existence of new Higgs bosons (see Ref. [12] for a recent review).

In this article, we consider the simple and motivated option of extending the SM by a single Higgs doublet, i.e. a two-Higgs-doublet model (2HDM); see Ref. [13] for a review. We will focus on flavor-violating signatures

motivated by an interesting set of anomalies, i.e. deviations from the SM predictions: nonzero rates of  $t \rightarrow bH^+(130) \rightarrow b\bar{b}c$ ,  $h \rightarrow e\tau$ , and  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$  as well as the deviations from the SM predictions in  $b \rightarrow s\ell^+\ell^-$ , the  $W$  mass, and  $R(D^{(*)})$ . For an explanation, flavor violation is clearly required (except for the  $W$  mass), and we will thus consider the 2HDM with generic Yukawa couplings [14–25] as a minimal model with the potential of explaining these measurements. However, there are various bounds from flavor and collider observables which must be respected, such that the model is very constrained and it is *a priori* not clear if a combined explanation is possible.

## II. G2HDM

In the 2HDM with generic Yukawa couplings (G2HDM), also called the type-III 2HDM, one can work in the so-called Higgs basis where only one Higgs doublet acquires a nonzero vacuum expectation value (VEV) [26] such that

$$H_1 = \begin{pmatrix} G^+ \\ \frac{v+\phi_1+iG^0}{\sqrt{2}} \end{pmatrix}, \quad H_2 = \begin{pmatrix} H^+ \\ \frac{\phi_2+iA}{\sqrt{2}} \end{pmatrix}. \quad (1)$$

Here,  $G^+$  and  $G^0$  are would-be Goldstone bosons, and  $H^+$  and  $A$  are the charged Higgs and the  $CP$ -odd Higgs boson, respectively, with  $v \approx 246 \text{ GeV}$ . The Yukawa couplings can then be written as

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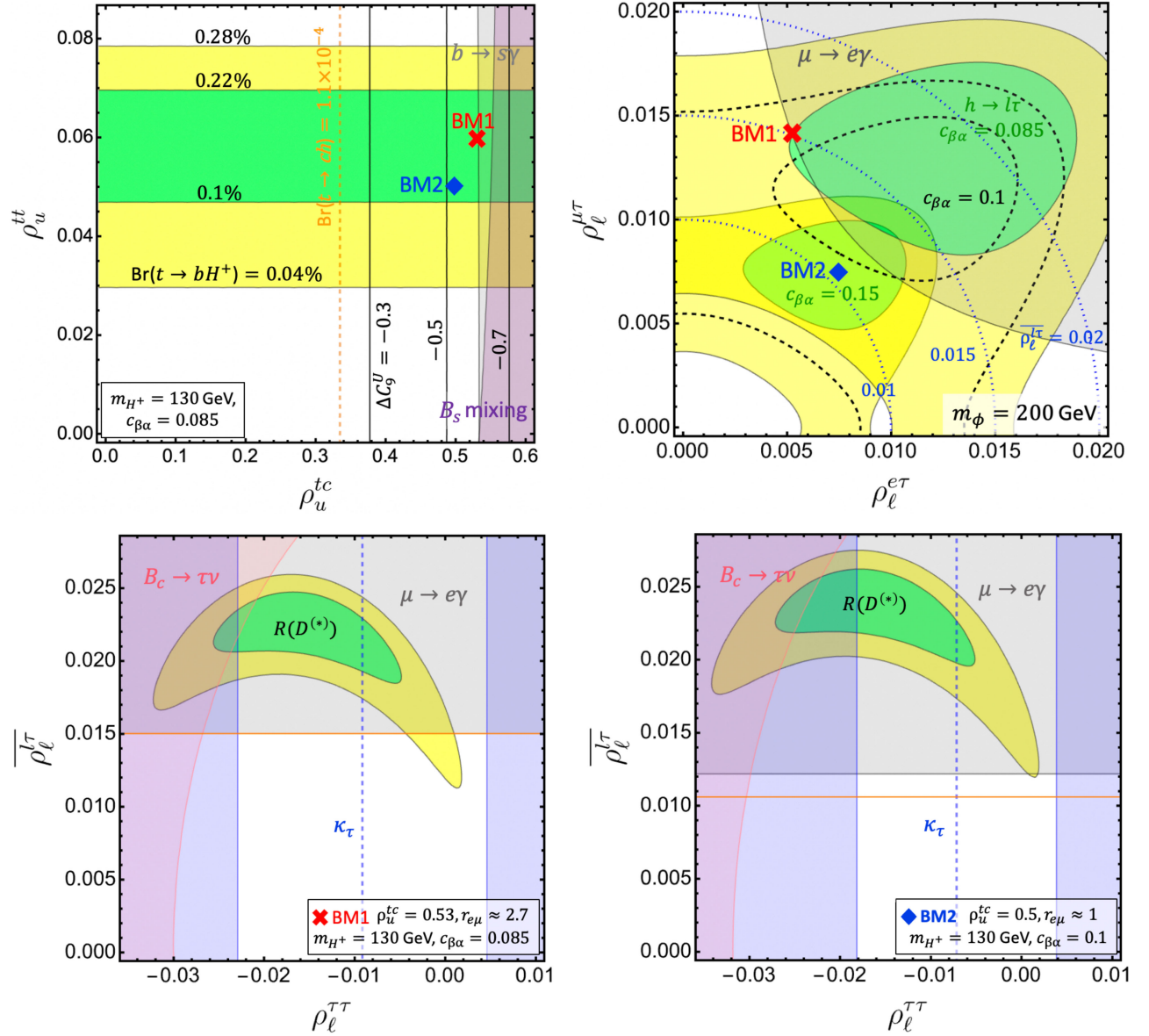


FIG. 1. Upper left: predicted values of  $\Delta C_9^U$  and preferred regions for  $\text{Br}(t \rightarrow bH^+)$  in the  $\rho_u^{tc}$ - $\rho_u^{tt}$  plane along with constraints from  $b \rightarrow s\gamma$  (lighter gray) and  $B_s - \bar{B}_s$  mixing (darker gray) assuming  $\text{Br}(H^+ \rightarrow bc) \approx 100\%$ . The HL-LHC sensitivity to  $\text{Br}(t \rightarrow hc)$  is shown for  $c_{\beta\alpha} = 0.085$  (orange-dashed line). The red cross and the blue diamond indicate our two benchmark points BM1 and BM2, respectively. Upper right: preferred regions ( $1\sigma$  and  $2\sigma$ ) from  $h \rightarrow l\tau$  for  $c_{\beta\alpha} = 0.085$ ,  $c_{\beta\alpha} = 0.1$  and  $c_{\beta\alpha} = 0.15$ , in the  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}$ - $\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  plane as well as the exclusion region from  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  which, in a linear approximation, is independent of  $c_{\beta\alpha}$ . Bottom left (right): preferred regions from  $R(D^{(*)})$  ( $1\sigma$  and  $2\sigma$ ) as well as the exclusion region from  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  (gray),  $\kappa_\tau$  (blue), and  $B_c \rightarrow \tau\nu$  (red) in the  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$ - $\rho_\ell^{l\tau}$  plane assuming all Yukawa couplings to be real. The up-quark Yukawa couplings are set to the values of BM1 (BM2) given in the upper figures while the benchmark value of  $\rho_\ell^{l\tau}$  is indicated by the orange line. The current measured central value of  $\kappa_\tau$  is shown as a dashed blue line.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_Y = & -\bar{Q}_L^i (H_1 y_d^i + H_2 \rho_d^{ij}) d_R^i - \bar{L}_L^i (H_1 y_\ell^i + H_2 \rho_\ell^{ij}) e_R^i \\ & - \bar{Q}_L^i (V^\dagger)^{ij} (\tilde{H}_1 y_u^j + \tilde{H}_2 \rho_u^{jk}) u_R^j, \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $i, j$ , and  $k$  are flavor indices, and  $\tilde{H}_{1,2} = i\tau_2 H_{1,2}^*$  with  $\tau_2$  being the second Pauli matrix. We now perform the rotation

$$\begin{pmatrix} \phi_1 \\ \phi_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \cos \theta_{\beta\alpha} & \sin \theta_{\beta\alpha} \\ -\sin \theta_{\beta\alpha} & \cos \theta_{\beta\alpha} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} H \\ h \end{pmatrix} \quad (3)$$

to go to the mass eigenstates  $h$  and  $H$  for the neutral Higgses, where  $h$  is SM-like. Furthermore, writing  $Q = (V^\dagger u_L, d_L)^T$ , where  $V$  is the Cabbibo-Kobayashi-Maskawa (CKM) matrix [27,28], we arrive at the mass eigenbasis for the

fermions with  $y_i^f = \sqrt{2}m_{f_i}/v$  ( $m_{f_i}$  denoting the fermion masses).

Note that  $\rho_f^{ij}$  is independent of the fermion masses, i.e. contains 9 complex parameters each for  $f = u, d, \ell$ . The off-diagonal elements of  $\rho_d$  are stringently constrained by meson mixing and decays and we will thus disregard them. We will rather consider the minimal scenario where  $\rho_u^{tt}, \rho_u^{tc}, \rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}, \rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$ , and  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}$  are the only nonzero entries. In addition, we consider  $m_{H^\pm}, m_H, m_A$  and Higgs mixing parameter  $c_{\beta\alpha} \equiv \cos\theta_{\beta\alpha}$  as free parameters (with relevant impact on the phenomenology) while we disregard  $CP$  violation in the Higgs potential.

### III. PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

We can now consider the preferred size of the relevant free parameters  $\rho_u^{tt}, \rho_u^{tc}, \rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}, \rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}, \rho_\ell^{e\tau}, c_{\beta\alpha}, m_{H,A}$ , and  $m_{H^\pm}$ , assuming in the first step that all couplings are real and that the other new Yukawa couplings are negligibly small.

Concerning observables that are only sensitive to the charged Higgs contribution, we first use the excess in  $t \rightarrow H^+ b \rightarrow b\bar{b}c$  to fix  $m_{H^\pm} \approx 130$  GeV. Furthermore,  $b \rightarrow s\ell^+\ell^-$  favors sizable and negative  $\Delta C_9^U$  which can be obtained via  $\rho_u^{tc}$ , such that for  $\text{Br}(H^+ \rightarrow c\bar{b}) \approx 100\%$ , i.e.  $|\rho_\ell^{e\tau}|, |\rho_u^{cc}| \ll |\rho_u^{tc}|$ , leading to  $\rho_u^{tt} \approx 0.06$ . However, the possible effect in  $\Delta C_9^U$  is limited to  $\approx -0.6$  by the constraints from  $b \rightarrow s\gamma$  and  $B_s - \bar{B}_s$  mixing. This is illustrated in Fig. 1 (upper left). Note that the impact of the neutral Higgs bosons can be disregarded for these observables, such that we can choose two benchmark (BM) points for the couplings  $\rho_u^{tc}$ , i.e.  $\rho_u^{tt} = 0.53$  and  $\rho_u^{tc} = 0.5$  for BM1 and BM2, respectively for  $\rho_u^{cc} \approx 0$ .

Turning to observables sensitive to lepton couplings, the excesses in  $h \rightarrow e\tau$  and  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$  lead to a preference of nonzero values of  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}, \rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$ , and  $c_{\beta\alpha}$ .<sup>1</sup> This at the same time leads to an effect in  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  as illustrated in Fig. 1 (upper right). Note the mild dependence on the neutral Higgs masses which we set for definiteness to 200 GeV, and that explaining both  $h \rightarrow e\tau$  and  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$  at the same time is possible with a Higgs mixing of  $c_{\beta\alpha} \gtrsim 0.08$ . Since the significance of excesses in  $h \rightarrow e\tau$  and  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$  are slightly different, the contours are not symmetric in the  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}-\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  plane. To maximize the contribution to  $R(D^{(*)})$  while explaining  $h \rightarrow l\tau$  at  $1\sigma$  we fixed the  $r_{\mu e} \equiv \rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}/\rho_\ell^{e\tau} = 2.7$  and  $\overline{\rho_\ell^{l\tau}} \equiv \sqrt{|\rho_\ell^{e\tau}|^2 + |\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}|^2} \approx 0.015$  (BM1). In a more conservative setup we use and  $r_{\mu e} = 1$  and  $\overline{\rho_\ell^{l\tau}} = 0.011$

<sup>1</sup>In principle also  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}, \rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  could explain  $h \rightarrow e\tau$  and  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$ . However, in order to avoid chirally enhanced effects in  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  it is important that both  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  and  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  are not sizable. Furthermore, to avoid effects in  $b \rightarrow c\nu$ , we will opt for  $\rho_\ell^{l\tau} \neq 0$  and  $\rho_\ell^{\tau l} = 0$ .

TABLE I. The value of the parameters for BM3 and the corresponding predictions for the observables.

Parameters
$m_{H^\pm} = 130$ GeV, $m_\phi = 200$ GeV, $c_{\beta\alpha} = 0.1$ , $\rho_u^{tt} = 0.06$ , $\rho_u^{tc} = 0.47$ , $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau} = -0.01(1 \pm 1.8i)$ , $\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau} = 0.01$ , $\rho_\ell^{e\tau} = 0.006$
Predictions
$\text{Br}(t \rightarrow b\bar{b}c) = 0.16\%$ , $\Delta C_9^U = -0.47$ , $\text{Br}(h \rightarrow \mu\tau) = 0.061\%$ , $\text{Br}(h \rightarrow e\tau) = 0.022\%$ , $R(D) = 0.341$ , $R(D^*) = 0.272$ , $\kappa_\tau = 0.91$ , $\chi_{\text{SM}}^2 - \chi_{\text{G2HDM}}^2(\text{ST}, 2023) = 10.4$ , $\text{Br}(\mu \rightarrow e\gamma) = 2.0 \times 10^{-13}$ , $\Delta C_7 = -0.027$ , $R_{B_s} = 0.03$ , $\text{Br}(B_c \rightarrow \tau\bar{\nu}) = 30\%$ , $\text{Br}(t \rightarrow ch) = 3.0 \times 10^{-4}$

(BM2). Finally, since  $|\rho_\ell^{l\tau}| \ll |\rho_u^{tc}|$  the results discussed in the previous paragraph are not affected.

Let us now consider  $R(D^{(*)})$  in the lower panel in Fig. 1 for BM1 (left) and BM2 (right) where we also show the  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  exclusion region in the  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}-\overline{\rho_\ell^{l\tau}}$  plane. The red and blue regions are excluded by the  $B_c \rightarrow \tau\nu$  lifetime and  $\kappa_\tau$ , respectively. Note that the minimal deviation of  $\kappa_\tau$  from unity is 4% for BM1 since  $|\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}| \gtrsim 5 \times 10^{-3}$  and  $c_{\beta\alpha} \gtrsim 0.08$  are necessary to explain  $h \rightarrow l\tau$  and  $R(D^{(*)})$  simultaneously.

Note that the BM1 scenario is on the edge of the current constraints such that it can explain all anomalies as well as possible. However, we found that an explanation of  $R_{D^{(*)}}$  is possible only within  $2\sigma$  level. On the other hand, the BM2 scenario is more conservative with respect to the experimental bounds but is only in agreement with  $R(D^{(*)})$  at the boundary of the  $2\sigma$  level. The reason for this is that  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}$  and  $\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  are smaller which reduces the noninterfering effect NP with the SM. Since also an imaginary part of  $\rho_u^{tc}\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  leads to an amplitude which does not interfere with the SM in  $b \rightarrow c\tau\nu$ , this can help to explain  $R(D^{(*)})$ .<sup>2</sup> We can include the imaginary part of  $\rho_\ell^{l\tau}$  as  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  into the definition of  $\overline{\rho_\ell^{l\tau}}$ , i.e.  $\overline{\rho_\ell^{l\tau}} = \sqrt{|\rho_\ell^{e\tau}|^2 + |\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}|^2 + \text{Im}[\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}]^2}$ .<sup>3</sup> Once we consider complex  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$ , we can generate an imaginary value of the  $h\tau\tau$  coupling (for  $c_{\beta\alpha} \neq 0$ ). Since the ATLAS measurement of the SM-Higgs  $CP$  properties only starts to constrain this [31], the resulting bound is too weak to be relevant. Therefore,  $|\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}|$  can be bigger than in the case  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  is real and thus explain  $R(D^{(*)})$  with a smaller  $|\rho_u^{tc}|$  and hence yield a smaller value of  $\Delta C_7$ , alleviating the  $b \rightarrow s\gamma$  bound. The corresponding benchmark point (BM3) is given in Table I which explains  $t \rightarrow bH^+ \rightarrow b\bar{b}c$ ,  $h \rightarrow l\tau$ , and  $R(D^{(*)})$  within  $1\sigma$  with  $\Delta C_9^U \simeq -0.5$  and moderate  $\Delta C_7$  and  $\text{Br}(\mu \rightarrow e\gamma)$ .

<sup>2</sup>Note that electroweak baryogenesis could be realized with complex Yukawa couplings [29,30].

<sup>3</sup>Note that  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  does not contribute to  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$ . For simplicity we consider the complex  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  and assume that  $\rho_u^{tc}$  remains to be real. However,  $\rho_u^{tc}$  could be complex as well without conflicting  $\Delta\Gamma_B$ .



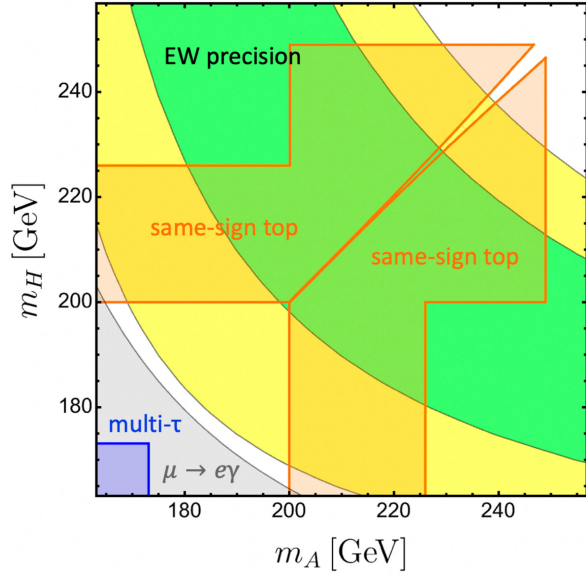


FIG. 2. Preferred regions (green:  $1\sigma$ ; yellow:  $2\sigma$ ) from electro-weak precision data along with exclusion regions from multitau and same-sign top searches as well as  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  in the  $m_A$ - $m_H$  plane.

Finally, we consider the impact of varying  $m_A$  and  $m_H$  in Fig. 2 for BM3. Multitau final state searches exclude the bottom-left<sup>4</sup> part of the  $m_A$ - $m_H$  plane and small values of  $m_A$  and  $m_H$  are also disfavored by  $\text{Br}(\mu \rightarrow e\gamma)$ . Same-sign top searches provide constraints if  $m_H, m_A \gtrsim 200$  GeV. However, because of the cancellation between the amplitudes from  $A$  and  $H$ ,  $m_H \simeq m_A$  can evade this bound. Furthermore, once  $\phi \rightarrow W^\pm H^\mp$  becomes kinematically allowed, same-sign top searches lose their constraining power. Note that top associated Higgs production [33] and bottom associated  $H^+$  production [34] as well as lowering the threshold of same-sign top searches [35,36] are crucial to probe this scenario.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Motivated by the hints for NP in  $t \rightarrow bH^+$ ,  $b \rightarrow s\ell^+\ell^-$ ,  $h \rightarrow e\tau$ ,  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$ ,  $m_W$ , and  $R(D^{(*)})$  we revisited the model with the minimal particle context that is potentially capable of providing a combined explanation, the 2HDM with generic sources of flavor violation. Even though the model is very predictive and hence constrained, we found a minimal set of parameters (Fig. 3) that can address these deviations from the SM predictions simultaneously without violating any other bounds. For this, a mild mass difference between the charged and additional neutral Higgs boson is necessary to evade the LHC constraint, at the same time improving the EW global fit by shifting the prediction for the  $W$  mass. Furthermore, a deviation in the SM Higgs

<sup>4</sup>Note that the inclusive di- $\tau$  resonance search [32] will be able to cover the region where either  $H$  or  $A$  is lighter than  $m_\tau + m_c$  in future.

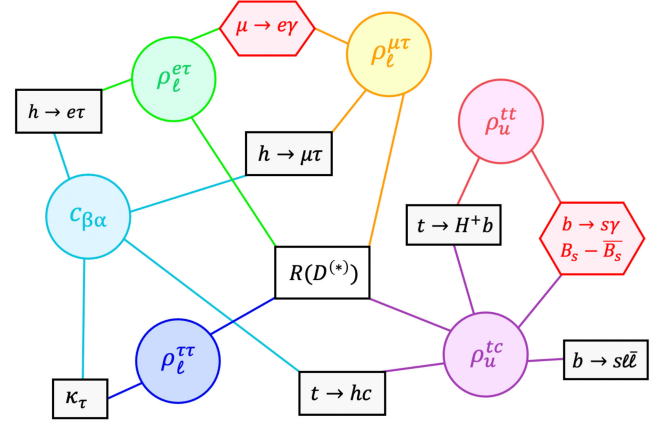


FIG. 3. Diagram showing the correlations between the free parameters (circles) of our model (except the Higgs masses) and the observables. Observables providing strong constraints are shown as red hexagons while the ones pointing toward a NP effect are shown as black rectangles.

coupling strength to tau leptons  $\kappa_\tau$  and a nonzero rate for  $t \rightarrow hc$  are predicted, both welcomed by current data.

While we assumed the other Yukawa coupling to be negligible,  $\rho_d^{bb} \approx \mathcal{O}(10^{-2})$  could be helpful to reduce the effect in  $\Delta C_7$  while allowing for  $b$ -associated production of the new neutral scalars at the LHC. Adding a small  $\rho_u^{cc}$  would induce  $\Delta C_9^U$  [see Eq. (4)] of the Supplemental Material [37].<sup>5</sup> Note that once we give up either  $h \rightarrow \mu\tau$  or  $h \rightarrow e\tau$ , the  $\mu \rightarrow e\gamma$  constraint can be relaxed such that  $R(D^{(*)})$  could be fully explained. This is because  $\rho_\ell^{e\tau}$  or  $\rho_\ell^{\mu\tau}$  can be larger and hence the smaller  $c_{\beta\alpha}$  is allowed. Then larger  $\rho_\ell^{\tau\tau}$  and smaller  $\rho_u^{tc}$  can explain  $R(D^{(*)})$ . While a smaller  $\rho_u^{tc}$  would lead to a smaller contribution to  $\Delta C_9^U$ , a tiny  $\rho_u^{cc}$  can already regenerate a sizable value. Note that a smaller  $\rho_u^{tc}$  would also be beneficial to avoid tuning the neutral Higgs masses while still avoiding collider constraints. To assess the validity of such a more complicated scenario, a global fit, e.g. with the public tool GAMBIT [38], is desirable for future research.

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<sup>5</sup>It is important to comment that an additional  $\rho_u^{cc}$  does not induce  $D - \bar{D}$  mixing since  $H^+$  does not couple to an up quark in our setup.

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