

1 [Urging Removal of Language Barriers from the State’s Rent Relief Program]

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3 **Resolution urging the Governor and the California Department of Housing and**  
4 **Community Development to immediately remove language barriers from the State’s**  
5 **rent relief program; to affirmatively and immediately conduct outreach to underserved**  
6 **populations and those underrepresented in present applications; and to redesign**  
7 **future rent relief programs to be fully accessible to those with or without access to the**  
8 **Internet and in multiple languages.**

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10 WHEREAS, The State of California generally and the City and County of San  
11 Francisco specifically have benefitted immeasurably from the labor, culture, and many other  
12 contributions of monolingual and ESL immigrants who came to this country speaking their  
13 own native languages; and

14 WHEREAS, According to the Planning Department’s most recent publication, San  
15 Francisco Neighborhoods Socio-Economic Profiles, on file with the Clerk of the Board of  
16 Supervisors in File No. 210572, which is hereby declared to be a part of this Resolution as if  
17 set forth fully herein, 26% of San Francisco households speak an Asian or Pacific Islander  
18 language at home, with 36% of those households designated as being “linguistically isolated,”  
19 while 11% of San Francisco households speak Spanish, with 21% of those households  
20 designated as “linguistically isolated,” per the same report; and

21 WHEREAS, Immigrant communities overall experienced greater adverse impacts from  
22 the COVID-19 crisis, according to research published by San Francisco Jobs with Justice, on  
23 file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 210572, which is hereby declared to  
24 be a part of this Resolution as if set forth fully herein, including data citing that Latinx  
25 households in the San Francisco-Oakland Metropolitan Area were five times more likely and

1 Asian families almost four times more likely to be behind on rent payments than White  
2 households between April 2020 and January 2021; and

3 WHEREAS, As highlighted by the report “On the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide”  
4 published by the Greenlining Institute at [https://greenlining.org/publications/online-  
5 resources/2020/on-the-wrong-side-of-the-digital-divide/](https://greenlining.org/publications/online-resources/2020/on-the-wrong-side-of-the-digital-divide/) low income and BIPOC communities  
6 are particularly and disproportionately challenged with inadequate access to the internet and  
7 the critical social services dependent on that access; and

8 WHEREAS, The State of California established and administers a COVID-19 Rent  
9 Relief program to distribute federal rent relief funds with over \$26 million in aid designated by  
10 formula for San Francisco tenants and began accepting applications on March 15, 2021; and

11 WHEREAS, The State of California’s Rent Relief program imposes numerous access  
12 barriers for small property owners, landlords and tenants whose primary language is not  
13 English or who lack access to the internet, including but not limited to the following:

- 14 • State program requirement that all applications be submitted via an on-line portal;
- 15 • State informational website and application portal that (with the exception of Spanish)  
16 rely primarily upon Google Translate, an application that, similar to other computer  
17 machine language programs, is frequently inaccurate, misleading or even offensive;
- 18 • State justification that some web pages are partially translated, while other essential  
19 pages and navigation cues require English literacy in order to complete the process;
- 20 • Inadequate State phone information line, which only recently provided multilingual  
21 services, and reportedly continues to provide unequal access to assistance to non-  
22 English speakers, based on tenant and tenant counselor testimonials; and

23 WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey of 2019, on  
24 file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 210572, which is hereby declared to  
25 be a part of this Resolution as if set forth fully herein, over 89,270 Chinese Americans are not

1 English proficient (10.6% of all San Franciscans) - the largest limited English proficient  
2 population in the City; and

3 WHEREAS, Data provided by the State on the rental assistance pipeline, on file with  
4 the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors in File No. 210572, which is hereby declared to be a  
5 part of this Resolution as if set forth fully herein, shows evidence of the program's language  
6 barriers, with only 88 applications out of 2,252 applications (or 3.9%) from persons whose  
7 primary language is Chinese; and

8 WHEREAS, The language barriers in the state's COVID 19 Rent Relief program may  
9 also exclude limited English proficient small property owners seeking to assist in providing  
10 rent relief for their tenants; and

11 WHEREAS, The County of San Francisco and other jurisdictions have created local  
12 programs with applications that are available in multiple languages and may be submitted  
13 both in paper and on-line with more extensive multilingual information and outreach than the  
14 state's existing program; and

15 WHEREAS, The State's present rent relief program will receive additional federal and  
16 potentially new state funding which without reforms may not equitably reach those in need;  
17 now, therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco  
19 (Board) urges the Governor and the California Department of Housing and Community  
20 Development (HCD) to immediately remove language barriers from the State's rent relief  
21 program for all of the state's significant language communities and provide equal access for  
22 those in need of assistance; and, be it

23 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges HCD to affirmatively and immediately  
24 conduct outreach to underserved populations and those underrepresented in present  
25 applications by engaging local and ethnic media and community based organizations to

1 encourage previously excluded applicants to reapply without regard to whether jurisdictions  
2 operate local rent relief programs; and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges HCD to redesign and implement future  
4 rent relief programs to be fully accessible to those with or without access to internet and in  
5 multiple languages to reflect the diversity of this state and the populations most severely  
6 impacted by the COVID 19 crisis; and, be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board directs the Clerk of the Board to send a copy  
8 of this Resolution to Governor Gavin Newsom, the City Lobbyist, and the offices of the State  
9 Legislative Delegation upon final passage.

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