

1 [Supporting Low-Income Rate Assistance Power Programs]

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3 **Resolution supporting a campaign to increase promotion and enrollment in San**
4 **Francisco's and California's Low-Income Rate Assistance Power Programs.**

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6 WHEREAS, Ensuring that all San Franciscans and Californians continue to have
7 access to clean and affordable electricity is critical to the ongoing livelihood and success of
8 our residents and businesses; and

9 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is San
10 Francisco's clean energy utility and serves 70% of San Francisco's electricity demand through
11 its two retail customer programs - CleanPowerSF and Hetch Hetchy Power; and

12 WHEREAS, Pacific Gas and Electric serves the remaining 30% of San Francisco's
13 electricity demand; and

14 WHEREAS, The SFPUC's CleanPowerSF is San Francisco's not-for-profit, community
15 choice energy program that provides clean, affordable electricity to more than 380,000
16 residents and businesses; and

17 WHEREAS, The SFPUC's Hetch Hetchy Power is the City's publicly owned power
18 utility, which provides 100 percent greenhouse gas free energy to public facilities, such as City
19 Hall, San Francisco International Airport, Muni buses, schools, libraries, along with public
20 housing and some private developments; and

21 WHEREAS, The SFPUC is committed to supporting its electricity customers, especially
22 low-income customers, with access to financial assistance and support, including bill discount
23 programs, flexible payment plans, and incentives for home energy upgrades, such as solar
24 installation; and

1 WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic is causing and is expected to continue to cause
2 serious negative impacts on the economy and financial impacts to residents, including loss of
3 income due to loss of work hours or wages, layoffs, and business closures; and

4 WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in unemployment and a
5 decrease in household income in every county of California. In the City and County of San
6 Francisco, as of September 18, 2020 the current unemployment rate is 8.8%; and

7 WHEREAS, COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place orders have resulted in higher residential
8 energy bills due to more residents at home during the day; and

9 WHEREAS, Since the City’s Shelter-in-Place order began, San Francisco residents are
10 using about 9 percent more electricity compared to previous months, and many are facing
11 economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

12 WHEREAS, A decrease in income in addition to an increase in home energy bills has
13 perpetuated an already serious problem of energy burden for low-income households; and

14 WHEREAS, An energy burden is the percentage of income that is spent on energy
15 bills, and high energy burdens persist in low-income homes as a result of households
16 allocating a disproportionate amount of their income towards utility-related expenses; and

17 WHEREAS, low-income households are at higher risk of being disconnected from utility
18 service for non-payment; and

19 WHEREAS, Previously Pacific Gas and Electric Company had the second highest
20 disconnection rate in comparison to other utility companies in California; and

21 WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, Mayor London Breed issued the Second Supplement
22 to Mayoral Proclamation Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency temporarily
23 suspending: (a) the discontinuation or shut off of power service for SFPUC Hetch Hetchy
24 Power Customers in San Francisco for non-payment of power bills, (b) the imposition of late
25 payment penalties or fees for delinquent Hetch Hetchy Power Customer accounts, and (c) the

1 return of delinquent CleanPowerSF Customers to PG&E generation service for failure to pay
2 CleanPowerSF charges; and

3 WHEREAS, On July 28th, the SFPUC via Commission Resolution No. 20-0162
4 extended the temporary suspension of: (a) the discontinuation or shut off of power service for
5 SFPUC Hetch Hetchy Power Customers in San Francisco for non-payment of power bills, (b)
6 the imposition of late payment penalties or fees for delinquent Hetch Hetchy Power Customer
7 accounts, and (c) the return of delinquent CleanPowerSF Customers to PG&E generation
8 service for failure to pay CleanPowerSF charges until January 2021; and

9 WHEREAS, The California Public Utilities Commission instituted a moratorium that
10 prohibits disconnections for non-payment until April 2021 for all residential households due to
11 the COVID-19 pandemic; and

12 WHEREAS, In May, the SFPUC launched an Emergency Customer Assistance
13 Program for water, sewer, and Hetch Hetchy Power customers to provide monthly bill
14 discounts for those financially impacted by COVID-19; and

15 WHEREAS, Hetch Hetchy Power changed the income eligibility requirements for the
16 existing Customer Assistance Program (CAP) so that all tenants living in affordable housing
17 would qualify, of which the Regular CAP and the Emergency CAP provides a 30% monthly
18 discount on electricity bills, and has been extended through the end of 2020 to increase
19 enrollment; and

20 WHEREAS, After Hetch Hetchy Power changed the income eligibility
21 requirements of CAP, all tenants were auto enrolled; and

22 WHEREAS, In July, the SFPUC launched a \$3 million bill relief credit program for
23 CleanPowerSF customers enrolled in either the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE)
24 or Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) discount programs offered by the State; and

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1 WHEREAS, The CleanPowerSF bill relief credit program benefited more than 48,000
2 low-income customers and provided one-time credits of \$50 for single-family homes, \$3,000
3 for multi-family residential buildings and \$750 for nonprofit or small commercial accounts—the
4 equivalent to a month’s worth of savings on the average customer’s electricity bill; and

5 WHEREAS, The SFPUC continues to proactively engage, inform, and educate
6 customers about available financial assistance, such as the Emergency Customer Assistance
7 Program and the CARE/FERA bill discount programs, through multilingual marketing and
8 advertising campaigns targeted to low-income customers, Limited English Proficient (LEP)
9 customers, customers behind on their bills, and communities most affected by COVID-19; and

10 WHEREAS, Since March, the SFPUC has directly reached more than 200,000
11 electricity customers through multilingual print and digital advertisements, neighborhood
12 billboards, direct mail, e-mail notifications, posters, flyers, and partnerships with community-
13 based organizations; and

14 WHEREAS, Since March, more than 6,000 customers have benefited from the
15 Emergency Customer Assistance Program, and CleanPowerSF customer enrollment in the
16 CARE/FERA program has increased by 30%; and

17 WHEREAS, Enrollment in low-income rate assistance programs such as Pacific Gas
18 and Electric Company’s California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate
19 Assistance Program (FERA) and Medical Baseline are crucial now more than ever; and

20 WHEREAS, Pacific Gas and Electric Company is required to administer federal and
21 state programs such as CARE, FERA, and Medical Baseline that provide eligible customers
22 with monthly discounts on home energy bills ranging from 18% to 30%; and

23 WHEREAS, While income qualified households may also apply for one-time financial
24 assistance through federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
25 (LIHEAP), these funds are very limited; and

1 WHEREAS, Similar to other LIHEAP Service Providers in California, San Francisco-
2 Peninsula Energy Services, a LIHEAP, is only able to help less than 6% of eligible households
3 each year with available LIHEAP funding; and

4 WHEREAS, San Francisco-Peninsula Energy Services and other LIHEAPs advocate
5 for low-income households to apply for low-income rate assistance programs offered by
6 Pacific Gas and Electric Company and is supported by many partners to prevent utility
7 disconnections and minimize economic hardships; now, therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors supports organizations serving
9 those in need by actively encouraging low-income constituents to apply for California’s low-
10 income rate assistance programs such as California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE),
11 Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA), and/or Medical Baseline Allowance; and,
12 be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors hereby formally urges the
14 SFPUC to continue its engagement in the California Public Utilities Commission’s proceedings
15 that address affordability and disconnections; and, be it

16 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors encourages the SFPUC to
17 continue to promote energy equity while supporting CleanPowerSF customers, particularly
18 low-income and LEP customers by regularly informing them of special consumer protections
19 and ways to lower their bills; and, be it

20 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC’s
21 CleanPowerSF Program to continue outreach efforts through multilingual print and digital
22 marketing and advertising; and, be it

23 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC’s not for
24 profit, Hetch Hetchy Power, to continue to serve the public and work towards meeting the
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1 needs of the local community and continue to bring significant financial relief to customers
2 during this stressful time; and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors reaffirms its commitment to
4 low-income customers and supports the work of community serving organizations like San
5 Francisco-Peninsula Energy Services to increase enrollment in low-income rate assistance
6 programs in the Bay Area and throughout California; and, be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors urges the
8 California Public Utilities Commission to take continued action to support ratepayers,
9 especially low-income ratepayers, during and after the COVID-19 emergency, and provide the
10 necessary oversight to ensure ratepayers have access to needed financial assistance and do
11 not experience service disconnections during this time; and, be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Mission Housing,
13 Episcopal Community Services SF, Human Good, Sequoia Living, Open House-SF, TODCO,
14 Catholic Charities SF, On Lok, YWCA (Young Women Christian Association), and YMCA of
15 San Francisco; social service organizations working with low-income populations to bring
16 awareness to California's California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate
17 Assistance Program (FERA), and Medical Baseline Allowance programs; and, be it

18 FURTHER RESOLOVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the SFPUC
19 Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission.
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