

1 [City Policy Restricting Payment to Twitter for Blue Checkmark Verification]

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3 **Resolution setting forth official City policy regarding restricting payment to Twitter for**
4 **blue checkmark verification (Twitter Blue Service).**

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6 WHEREAS, Twitter is a popular social media platform with millions of active users who
7 rely on it for news, entertainment, and engagement with their followers; and

8 WHEREAS, Twitter badge verification is a feature that helps users to distinguish
9 verified authentic accounts and imposter accounts, and it is commonly used by high-profile
10 individuals and businesses to build trust with their audience; and

11 WHEREAS, Twitter badge verification is primarily used as a tool to curb
12 misinformation, cut down accounts impersonating public figures, and build trust in the service;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Twitter announced effective April 1, 2023, they will end their legacy
15 verified program and remove legacy verified checkmarks; in order for accounts to keep their
16 blue checkmark on Twitter, individuals must pay for Twitter Blue; and

17 WHEREAS, As of March 27, 2023, Twitter Chief Executive, Elon Musk (Musk) tweeted
18 that beginning April 15, 2023, only tweets by verified users will show up in Twitter's default
19 main feed of "For You" recommendations; erification, formerly a service Twitter offered public
20 figures, is now available only to \$8-a-month subscribers to Twitter Blue which infuriated users;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, Charging users for a badge verification service goes against the spirit of
23 social media, which is meant to be an open and accessible platform for everyone to use; and

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1 WHEREAS, Business accounts, which include governmental accounts, are also
2 subject to the charge to subscribe to Twitter’s verified organizations service, which are subject
3 to \$1,000 a month charges and an additional \$50 per month for each affiliated account; and

4 WHEREAS, The new fee calls into question whether businesses and government
5 entities can afford to pay a minimum of \$12,000 a year to maintain a verification badge on a
6 single one of their business accounts; and

7 WHEREAS, Musk has given April 1, 2023, as the deadline for public figures,
8 journalists, government agencies and others currently verified for free to pay up or lose their
9 verification badges; and

10 WHEREAS, This mandate is concerning as government agencies rely on their verified
11 accounts to inform the public on behalf of the administration; verification, combined with the
12 designated Twitter profiles, helped to ensure the public could trust those messages; and

13 WHEREAS, Many, including most newsrooms, vowed not to pay for accreditation,
14 arguing that it no longer signals authority if any user can purchase a check mark; and

15 WHEREAS, The White House of the U.S. President will not pay to have its staff's
16 official Twitter profiles continue to be verified; and

17 WHEREAS, On March 31, 2023, White House director of digital strategy Rob Flaherty
18 told staffers, “It is our understanding that Twitter Blue does not provide person-level
19 verification as a service. Thus, a blue checkmark will now simply serve as a verification that
20 the account is a paid user.”; and

21 WHEREAS, On April 1, 2023, Twitter removed the “verified” badge from the New York
22 Times’ main account, a move that billionaire owner Musk pushed for overnight after learning
23 that the news organization would not pay for its Twitter Blue service; and

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1 WHEREAS, On March 30, 2023, The Washington Post spokesperson announced that
2 they will not pay for Twitter Blue service as an institution or on behalf of their journalists as it's
3 evident that verified checkmarks no longer represent authority and expertise; and

4 WHEREAS, On March 30, 2023, The Los Angeles Times spokesperson announced
5 that they too do not plan on paying; firstly, verification no longer establishes authority or
6 credibility, instead it will only mean that someone has paid for a Twitter Blue subscription;
7 secondly, while Twitter remains an important tool for newsgathering, it is not as reliable as it
8 once was; and

9 WHEREAS, Musk should not charge users for badge verification; by doing so, Twitter
10 is going against its mission to promote authenticity and transparency on its platform; and

11 WHEREAS, As a social media platform, Twitter should prioritize authenticity and
12 transparency; charging users for badge verification undermines this mission by creating a
13 system where only those who can afford to pay are more likely to be verified; this system goes
14 against the principles of a fair and transparent platform; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors declares that it is the official policy of the
16 City and County of San Francisco not pay for Twitter Blue service as an institution or on
17 behalf of their staff's official Twitter profiles; and, be it

18 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
19 Francisco urges Twitter to develop a fair and transparent process for verifying accounts based
20 on merit and not financial means; and, be it

21 FINALLY RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
22 Francisco directs the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to transmit a copy of this Resolution to
23 Twitter Chief Executive, Elon Musk, local state legislative representatives and Governor Gavin
24 Newsom.