

1 [Urging a Full Pardon of Sakhone Lasaphangthong and Somdeng “Danny” Thongsy]

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3 **Resolution urging the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, to grant**
4 **Sakhone Lasaphangthong and Somdeng “Danny” Thongsy a full pardon to allow them**
5 **to remain in the United States.**

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7 WHEREAS, The American War in Southeast Asia (Vietnam War/Secret War) resulted
8 in refugee resettlement to the United States of people from Laos, including people from the
9 Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lu-Mien, Khmu and other ethnic minority groups; and

10 WHEREAS, Many of the same refugees have been served deportation orders, some
11 who have no family ties, do not speak the language, or have never lived in Laos; and if
12 deported would face marginalization, violence, or death; and

13 WHEREAS, Sakhone Lasaphangthong was born in war-torn Laos, was separated from
14 four out of his nine siblings at the age of 5, and lived at a refugee camp in Thailand for two
15 years before arriving in the United States to California; and

16 WHEREAS, Lasaphangthong experienced the trauma of war in Laos, grew up when
17 “tough-on-crime” policies criminalized communities of color resulting in mass incarceration
18 and children serving life sentences, and wound up in the criminal justice system at age 22 for
19 second degree murder; and

20 WHEREAS, While incarcerated for 20 years of a 30-year sentence before being
21 granted parole, Lasaphangthong transformed his life, devoting his time to education, attaining
22 three associate degrees in social and behavioral science, general business, and American
23 studies; leveraging his status among other prisoners to convince them to join the college
24 program, increasing the attendance from 4 to 300; and

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1 WHEREAS, Following his release, Lasaphangthong made numerous positive
2 contributions to his community and society, moving to San Francisco, working as an
3 Ambassador for Asian Prisoner Support Committee and Housing Manager for Family Bridges,
4 cleaning streets in Oakland Chinatown and connecting homeless individuals with resources,
5 and spearheading a campaign to successfully move 38 individuals from the streets into the
6 Oak Street Community Cabins; and

7 WHEREAS, Lasaphangthong is facing imminent deportation to Laos, away from his
8 home in the United States to a country he fled as a small child; and

9 WHEREAS, Somdeng “Danny” Thongsy was born in a refugee camp in Thailand after
10 his family fled the war in Laos and later resettled in Stockton California; and

11 WHEREAS, Thongsy experienced the traumas of war in Laos, the violent death of his
12 brother, growing up in an impoverished neighborhood, and wound up incarcerated as a minor
13 at the age of 17 for second degree murder; and

14 WHEREAS, While incarcerated for more than 20 years, Thongsy transformed his life,
15 incurring no disciplinary record throughout prison, graduating with a high school and college
16 degree, joining and facilitating numerous self-help programs, mentoring others to make
17 positive choices, finding spirituality and becoming active in chapel programs and religious
18 studies, advocating with Kids Creating Awareness Together (Kid CAT), helping pass
19 California’s Senate Bill (SB) 260 and SB261 Fair Sentencing for Youth, to give youth impacted
20 by the criminal justice system a fair chance of parole; and

21 WHEREAS, Following his release, Thongsy made numerous positive contributions to
22 his community and society, beginning a fellowship at Asian Americans Advancing Justice –
23 Asian Law Caucus (AAJC-ALC) as a Yuri Kochiyama Fellow, engaging in community
24 outreach as a member of the Asian Prisoner Support Committee, being active in his church
25 community and interfaith organizations, volunteering extensively in the Bay Area helping with

1 re-entry support and teaching origami to youth, attending leadership workshops and
2 conferences, and promoting community justice and safety as a Campaigner/Coordinator at
3 the Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County; and

4 WHEREAS, Thongsy is facing imminent deportation to Laos, a country he has never
5 set foot in because of his immigration status, and the United States is the only country he has
6 known given that he arrived here as a refugee when he was 2 years old; and

7 WHEREAS, Pardon is one of the only ways to prevent deportation, and would give
8 Lasaphangthong and Thongsy the chance to remain in the United States and remain as
9 contributing members of society; and

10 WHEREAS, On April 2, 2019, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously
11 passed File No. 190320, which is a resolution respectfully urging the Trump Administration to
12 stop the massive deportation of rehabilitated formerly incarcerated Southeast Asian nationals;
13 now, therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco supports an immigration
15 system that keeps families together and does not determine a person's value by their
16 immigration status or whether they have been incarcerated; and, be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco condemns the
18 deportation of Southeast Asian refugees in the United States, especially ethnic minorities, and
19 does not support the removal of Lasaphangthong and Thongsy from the U.S.; and, be it

20 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors requests that
21 Governor Gavin Newsom pardon Sakhone Lasaphangthong and Somdeng "Danny" Thongsy
22 so they can remain in their homes in the United States and continue to improve our
23 community; and, be it

24 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors hereby directs
25 the Clerk of the Board to transmit copies to Federal and State Representatives in San

1 Francisco with a request to take all action necessary to achieve the objectives of this
2 Resolution.

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