

1 [Urging Public Health Orders to Prioritize Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness
2 During the COVID-19 Crisis]

3 **Resolution urging Public Health Orders to prioritize the needs of people experiencing**
4 **homelessness and to create clear guidelines for homeless people’s health and safety**
5 **during the COVID-19 crisis.**

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7 WHEREAS, As of the latest Point in Time Count, there are 8,035 people experiencing
8 homelessness in San Francisco, 64% or 5,180 of whom are unsheltered; and

9 WHEREAS, In 2018, the Board of Supervisors in File No. 180864 declared that a
10 shelter crisis pursuant to Government Code, Section 8698.2 exists in the City and County of
11 San Francisco, and made findings that the health and safety of unsheltered persons in San
12 Francisco is threatened by a lack of shelter; and

13 WHEREAS, The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a growing threat to the health
14 and safety of all San Franciscans, especially vulnerable populations like older adults and
15 people who have serious underlying medical conditions; and

16 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, “People
17 experiencing homelessness often have a higher risk for exposure to communicable diseases
18 and have little access to health care systems and treatment in their communities;” and

19 WHEREAS, On March 6, 2020, the San Francisco Health Officer issued a Declaration
20 of Local Health Emergency Regarding Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), which was
21 preceded by a March 4, 2020, Proclamation of a State of Emergency issued by Governor
22 Gavin Newsom and a February 25, 2020, Proclamation by the Mayor Declaring the Existence
23 of a Local Emergency; and

1 WHEREAS, Few protective measures have been announced for people experiencing
2 homelessness, both sheltered and unsheltered against the pandemic in San Francisco, and
3 Health Orders and local officials have given conflicting guidance; and

4 WHEREAS, Shelter at Home is a core public health intervention that, along with
5 isolation of cases, quarantine of contacts, social distancing, and widespread testing, interrupt
6 the community spread of the novel coronavirus thereby reducing illness and severe disease,
7 reducing demands on the health care system, and reducing social and economic disruption
8 for in San Francisco; and

9 WHEREAS, Ethical principles require us to ensure social equity and racial equity in the
10 distribution of limited resources and to ensure all San Francisco residents, including persons
11 experiencing homelessness, and especially seniors and medical fragile, have equal
12 opportunity to Shelter at Home and to benefit from reduced exposure to novel coronavirus and
13 COVID-19; and

14 WHEREAS, Shelters provide safety in normal times, however during the current
15 pandemic any congregate living arrangement increases the risk of transmission; and

16 WHEREAS, At a March 17, 2020, Board of Supervisors meeting, the Director of the
17 San Francisco Human Services Agency in charge of procuring private rooms stated that “the
18 Department of Public Health guidance is not to take a homeless individual who is on the street
19 and put him or her in a hotel room with no services. They would prefer that people on the
20 street are placed in shelters and congregate areas where they can better monitor them and
21 bring services onsite;” and

22 WHEREAS, During the same meeting, the San Francisco Health Officer Dr. Tomas
23 Aragon stated that: “From a disease-transmission perspective, absolutely having your own
24 room is the best;” and

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1 WHEREAS, There is an urgent need for clarity on the guidance for homeless
2 individuals in congregate settings or living unsheltered; and

3 WHEREAS, The latest March 16, 2020, Order of the Health Officer (C19-09)
4 recognizes that “The virus that causes Coronavirus 2019 Disease (“COVID-19”) is easily
5 transmitted, especially in group settings, and it is essential that the spread of the virus be
6 slowed to protect the ability of public and private health care providers to handle the influx of
7 new patients and safeguard public health and safety;” and

8 WHEREAS, On March 18, 2020, the California Business, Consumer Services and
9 Housing Agency released Interim Guidance for Homeless Assistance Providers on Novel
10 Coronavirus (COVID-19) that mirrors the recommendations from the Centers for Disease
11 Control and Prevention (CDC); and

12 WHEREAS, While local Health Order mandates general Social Distancing
13 Requirements that include maintaining at least six-foot social distancing, the State Interim
14 Guidance and CDC recommend that “In general sleeping areas (for those who are not
15 experiencing respiratory symptoms), ensure that beds/mats are at least 3 feet apart, and
16 request that all clients sleep head to-toe;” and

17 WHEREAS, As of March 23, 2020, the San Francisco Department of Health
18 recommendations for “Preventing Spread of COVID-19 among Persons Experiencing
19 Homelessness” had not been updated since March 11, 2020, and do not contain a
20 recommended distancing between beds in emergency shelters; and

21 WHEREAS, The local guidelines recommend that emergency shelter providers screen
22 clients for symptoms: “Screen on intake and daily for: Fever (temperature over 100.4°F or
23 38°C)” and “Have thermometers available for staff” but does not outline specific screening
24 protocols; and

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1 WHEREAS, Emergency shelter providers have not been given clear guidance or
2 support to meet the local, state, or CDC recommended guidelines; and

3 WHEREAS, For example, as of March 22, 2020, SFPD and HSH had not provided
4 no-contact thermometers to emergency shelter providers, preventing staff from following
5 recommended screening guidelines; and

6 WHEREAS, As of March 23, 2020, emergency shelter providers in San Francisco have
7 been given no direct resources or support to modify the arrangement of beds or cots in
8 shelters to abide by the new guidelines; and

9 WHEREAS, As of March 23, 2020, the City's largest shelter continues to shelter at
10 least 340 people, with no reduced capacity since the outbreak; and

11 WHEREAS, As of March 23, 2020, many of the City's largest emergency shelters
12 continue to shelter dozens of vulnerable seniors and immunocompromised individuals in close
13 proximity to each other; and

14 WHEREAS, Some congregate emergency shelters are being asked to expand rather
15 than reduce their capacity; and

16 WHEREAS, The crowded conditions in San Francisco's emergency shelters run
17 contrary to the City's social distancing requirements; and

18 WHEREAS, Although homeless individuals are specifically exempt from the shelter in
19 place order, the conditions in San Francisco's emergency shelters run contrary to the principle
20 behind the mandate to shelter in place to slow the transmission of a communicable disease;
21 and;

22 WHEREAS, A homeless encampment in San Jose has already experienced an
23 unsheltered person dying due to coronavirus; and

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1 WHEREAS, The City and County’s current hotel procurement is focused on sites for
2 those who have COVID-19 but don’t require hospitalization and those at-risk or awaiting test
3 results and need to quarantine; and

4 WHEREAS, On March 16, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom secured 393
5 rooms across two hotels in Oakland “to get people out of these encampments,” and
6 announced that additional rooms are anticipated to “find additional hotel beds for people
7 sleeping outside;” and

8 WHEREAS, The state of California “is immediately procuring 1,309 travel trailers from
9 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and private vendors to provide quarantine
10 capacity – moving people out of shelters and into isolation placements, focused on people
11 with COVID-19 or those demonstrating symptoms;” and

12 WHEREAS, Governor Newsom’s directive to procure travel trailers prioritizes
13 “protect[ing] healthy people in those facilities and create capacity in the existing shelter
14 network;” and

15 WHEREAS, San Francisco currently has approximately 30,000 vacant housing units
16 and more than 40,000 empty hotel rooms; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (the “Board”) urges the
18 Public Health Officer to issue a new Order of the Health Officer to mandate that all homeless
19 individuals in congregate emergency shelters who can self-care be placed in private rooms
20 immediately; and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Public Health Officer to issue a new
22 Order of the Health Officer to mandate strict social distancing requirements in congregate
23 emergency shelters, including a “shelter-thinning” mandate with strict maximum capacities;
24 and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Public Health Officer to issue a new
2 Order of the Health Officer to set screening standards in congregate shelters and protocols for
3 testing and people exhibiting symptoms; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Department of Public Health to
5 create clear guidelines for homeless people’s health and safety during the COVID crisis,
6 including amending Order C19-07 (“Shelter In Place”) issued on March 16, 2020, to clarify
7 how the shelter-in-place directive applies to homeless individuals; and, be it

8 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the San Francisco Human Services
9 Agency in partnership with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to
10 urgently procure adequate rooms, estimated at least 1,500, for the primary purpose of getting
11 people who are currently in congregate emergency shelters into private rooms; and, be it

12 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the San Francisco Human Services
13 Agency in partnership with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to
14 urgently procure adequate rooms, estimated at least 3,500, for the primary purpose of getting
15 people who are currently unsheltered on the streets or in encampments in private rooms; and,
16 be it

17 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the San Francisco Human Services
18 Agency in partnership with the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to
19 urgently procure adequate rooms for the primary purpose of getting people who are being
20 released from incarceration into private rooms, rather than shelters or encampments; and, be
21 it

22 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors (the “Board”)
23 urges Governor Newsom to secure rooms in San Francisco for the primary purpose of getting
24 people who are currently unsheltered on the streets or in encampments inside in private
25 rooms, similar to his actions in Oakland; and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the San Francisco Human Services
2 Agency to allow the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to issue hotel
3 vouchers to providers of emergency shelter; and, be it

4 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors urges the
5 Departments of Homelessness and Supportive Housing and Public Health to immediately
6 support emergency shelter providers to abide by social distancing guidelines; and, be it

7 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the Department of Homelessness and
8 Supportive Housing to work with emergency shelter providers to identify the maximum
9 number of clients who can be safely sheltered in each shelter with appropriate social
10 distancing in each shelter; and, be it

11 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board urges the San Francisco Human Services
12 Agency and Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing to immediately begin
13 transporting older shelter clients over the age of 65 into private rooms; and, be it

14 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board, upon passage of this Resolution,
15 shall transmit copies of this resolution to Governor Newsom, Assemblymember Phil Ting,
16 Assemblymember David Chiu, Senator Scott Wiener; the San Francisco Public Health Officer;
17 Mayor London N. Breed; and the Directors of the San Francisco Human Service Agency,
18 Department of Public Health, and Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

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