

1 [Urging to Reduce Prison Population to Protect People Incarcerated and Staff at San Quentin
2 State Prison From COVID-19]

3 **Resolution urging Governor Gavin Newsom, Secretary Ralph Diaz of the California**
4 **Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and Acting Warden Ron Broomfield to**
5 **take immediate measures including reducing prison population to protect people**
6 **incarcerated and staff at San Quentin State Prison from COVID-19.**

7
8 WHEREAS, as of Sunday, June 28, 2020, over 1,000 incarcerated people at San
9 Quentin State Prison have tested positive for COVID-19, meaning nearly 1 in 3 incarcerated
10 people have now been infected and that the number of cases in the last week has more than
11 quadrupled; and

12 WHEREAS, 89 staff members at San Quentin have tested positive for COVID-19; and

13 WHEREAS, Effective social distancing is impossible within the confined environment of
14 a prison, where cramped cells, shared showers, restrooms, and common areas allow COVID-
15 19 to spread rapidly; and

16 WHEREAS, San Quentin's outbreak began after the May 30, 2020, transfer of
17 incarcerated people from the California Institution for Men in Chino who were not adequately
18 screened for COVID-19; and

19 WHEREAS, San Quentin is overpopulated and overcrowded, and as of April 30, 2020,
20 San Quentin was incarcerating people at 122.5% of its design capacity at 3,082, with 3,776
21 occupants; and

22 WHEREAS, San Quentin's overcrowding prevents effective cleaning or disinfection of
23 the incarcerated people's quarters; and

1 WHEREAS, San Quentin is already running low on cells with solid doors to isolate
2 incarcerated people who are infected and the infrastructure creates an incredibly dangerous
3 breeding ground for the virus; and

4 WHEREAS, The San Quentin Inmate Family Council, representing family members of
5 people incarcerated at San Quentin, sent a letter to Governor Newsom and California
6 Department of Corrections stating, "San Quentin is used as the premier example of
7 redemption and rehabilitation. Many people visit San Quentin for the chance to witness the full
8 potential for change and to remember what's possible, in hopes that they can bring even a
9 small fraction of that same kind of transformation into their own lives. Numerous elected
10 officials, writers, artists, activists, musicians, scholars, and importantly, victims and survivors,
11 have entered those walls in search of humanity. While the people incarcerated in San Quentin
12 have certainly caused harm which led to their imprisonment, many have also worked hard to
13 take accountability for their actions and to do everything in their power to make amends. In
14 addition to what they have taken, they have also given society a lot. They have shown us
15 what is humanly possible when it comes to change and redemption, and they have given
16 CDCR the ability to point to a programming prison as an example of how what they're doing
17 works. The time has come to honor that depiction;" and

18 WHEREAS, The San Quentin Inmate Family Council, representing family members of
19 people incarcerated at San Quentin also demand that CDCR dramatically reduce San
20 Quentin's population by releasing people incarcerated under Government Code, Section 8658
21 (not transfers) to allow for proper social distancing and include lifers in these releases, and to
22 improve systems of communication between the people inside and their loved ones on the
23 outside; and

24 WHEREAS, Current plans by the Governor and California Department of Corrections
25 and Rehabilitation to gradually release a small number of incarcerated people are inadequate

1 and do not go far enough to ensure incarcerated people's safety and prevent deaths at San
2 Quentin; and

3 WHEREAS, There are a number of incarcerated people over the age of 60 who only
4 have a matter of weeks left on their sentences and yet are still being held in an extremely
5 dangerous environment during a pandemic; and

6 WHEREAS, A team of UCSF and UC Berkeley health experts has found that San
7 Quentin's prison population needs to be cut by at least 50% in order to prevent a
8 "catastrophic" outbreak; and

9 WHEREAS, The aforementioned team of health experts remarked that "San Quentin is
10 an extremely dangerous place for an outbreak, everything should be done to decrease the
11 number of people exposed to this environment as quickly as possible;" and

12 WHEREAS, Judge Jon Steven Tigar, a United States District Judge of the United
13 States District Court for the Northern District of California, stated that "the architecture of San
14 Quentin creates an incredibly dangerous breeding ground for the virus with its cell blocks 5-
15 tiers- high and housing more than 800 men in unsanitary conditions without proper ventilation
16 and that the CDCR's only option for minimizing the harm to the incarcerated population would
17 be to dramatically reduce the population of San Quentin;" and

18 WHEREAS, A disproportionately high percentage of San Quentin's incarcerated
19 population is made up of African American men and other people of color; and

20 WHEREAS, The ongoing disproportionate imprisonment of African American men and
21 other people of color is part of a national system of mass incarceration that perpetuates racial
22 inequalities and has been widely considered a modern continuation of Jim Crow segregation;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, There is currently an international mass movement to recognize that Black
25 Lives Matter, including the lives of African Americans who are incarcerated; and

1 WHEREAS, It is not enough to merely state that Black Lives Matter, and real action
2 must be taken to combat systemic racism at every level of society; now, therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco
4 urges Governor Newsom, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Secretary
5 Ralph Diaz, and Warden Ron Broomfield to commit to cutting the population of San Quentin
6 State Prison by at least 50% via decarceration as rapidly as possible, including by granting
7 clemency to people who are incarcerated based on individualized assessments about their
8 current ability to be safely released, and/or by exercising the power for emergency release
9 under Government Code, Section 8658; and, be it

10 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
11 Francisco urges Governor Newsom, Secretary Ralph Diaz, and Warden Ron Broomfield to
12 provide adequate coronavirus testing and personal protective equipment to all incarcerated
13 people and prison staff at San Quentin, as well as free tele-visits for all people who are, for
14 the length of the pandemic; and, be it

15 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
16 Francisco urges Governor Newsom, Secretary Ralph Diaz, and Warden Ron Broomfield to
17 provide increased and consistent information about the situation at San Quentin to both the
18 public generally and incarcerated people's families specifically, including but not limited to a
19 designated point of contact for incarcerated people's families, regular email updates on San
20 Quentin itself, and a phone line for family members of incarcerated people to call to find out
21 their health status; and, be it

22 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
23 Francisco urges Governor Newsom, Secretary Ralph Diaz, and Warden Ron Broomfield to
24 end unsafe transfers to and from San Quentin for the length of the pandemic; and, be it

1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
2 Francisco directs the Clerk of the Board to submit copies of this Resolution to Governor
3 Newsom, Secretary Ralph Diaz, and Warden Ron Broomfield.