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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Link to [Press Conference Video Here](#)

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

*****SUPERVISOR SHAMANN WALTON AND ASSEMBLYMEMBER ROB BONTA
JOIN FORCES TO STOP DISCRIMINATORY 911 CALLS*****

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - Today, Supervisor Shamann Walton will be introducing an ordinance known as the Caution Against Racially Exploitative Non-Emergencies (CAREN) Act to amend the San Francisco Police Code to making it unlawful for an individual to fabricate false racially biased emergency reports and will be joining efforts with Assembly Member Rob Bonta of Oakland on the statewide AB 1550 bill by holding the person committing the discriminatory 911 call accountable.

With the rise of smartphones, there has been an increase of racial profiling and discriminatory incidents recorded and shared on social media and subsequently broadcasted on the news nationwide. Within the last month and a half in the Bay Area, an individual called the police on a Black man who was dancing and exercising on the street in his Alameda neighborhood and a couple called the police on a Filipino man stenciling "Black Lives Matter" in chalk in front of his own residence in San Francisco's Pacific Heights. Nationally, a woman called the police on a Black man who was bird watching in New York's Central Park while accusing him of harassing her and George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis after someone called the police accusing him of using counterfeit money at a store where he purchased cigarettes. These are only a few examples that have been publicized recently and there are countless others that do not get news coverage or are not recorded.

The existing California law makes false police reports a misdemeanor or a felony offense punishable by up to six months in jail. Under existing laws, there are no consequences for people who make fraudulent emergency calls based on the perception of another individual to be a



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threat due to their race, religion, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or outward appearance.

When law enforcement respond to non-emergency calls as a result of the caller's racism and racial bias, it diverts resources away from actual emergencies to the unnecessary policing of people of color. Under current laws, only the public entity responding to the false emergency report may seek remedy leaving the person harmed by the call with long lasting emotional distress and trauma. This is another form of racial violence instigated against people of color that causes further mistrust between communities of color and law enforcement.

“The CAREN Act and AB 1550 are a joint local and state effort to address and discourage using 911 as customer service based on someone’s race,” said Supervisor Walton. “We know that Oregon and New York have passed similar legislation and we hope that other municipalities and states can implement laws to protect the rights of communities of color who are often targeted and victims of fraudulent emergency calls. The CAREN Act will make it unlawful for an individual to contact law enforcement solely to discriminate on the basis of a person’s race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. We will also introduce a resolution today in support of AB 1550 at the full board.”

“We must not allow people to use our 911 and law enforcement systems as weapons for hate. The CAREN Act and my AB 1550 demonstrate our commitment to directly address such racism and bolster our California values of justice, inclusion, equity and opportunity," said Assemblymember Bonta. "If you are afraid of a black family barbecuing in the community park, a man dancing and doing his normal exercise routine in the bike lane, or someone who asks you to comply with dog leash laws in a park, and your immediate response is to call the police, the real problem is with your own personal prejudice.”

“There should be consequences for actions that threaten the freedom and safety of others,” said Director Sheryl Davis of the Human Rights Commission. “Calling the police on someone that you label as out of place, simply for being Black or a person of color in public, is just as dangerous as yelling fire in a crowded theater. You are putting someone’s well-being at risk by subjecting them to a humiliating, unnecessary, sometimes lethal police interaction. Fining 911



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abusers who waste police time and violate their fellow citizens' civil rights is one way to discourage this abhorrent behavior.”

“It’s time to hold people accountable for these frivolous, racist, and life-threatening calls,” says Shakirah Simley, Director of the Office of Racial Equity. “In a time where we are rethinking policing and it’s disparate impact on the Black community, we need more meaningful measures in place to put an end to racial profiling.”

Both Supervisor Walton’s CAREN Act and Assembly Member Bonta’s AB 1550 will provide a civil cause of action for people harmed by discriminatory 911 calls, establishing civil liability for the person committing the discriminatory 911 call and monetary fines. AB 1550 will classify this act as a hate crime and allow the person harmed to sue the caller making a fraudulent 911 call for no less than \$250 and up to \$10,000 in damages. A person violating the CAREN Act will be liable for damages no less than \$1,000. Creating a means for people who suffer this kind of discrimination to seek redress from those who have targeted them through a civil cause of action for damages will discourage this type of behavior and provide a tangible way for these victims to be compensated for this wrong.

AB 1550 is currently undergoing the committee process at the California State Senate Public Safety Committee. The CAREN Act will have a 30-day hold after introduction and likely be heard at the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee at the Board of Supervisors. The CAREN Act will be in effect 30 days after the Mayor signs the ordinance in San Francisco.

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