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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, While incarcerated for 20 years of a 30-year sentence before being granted parole, Lasaphangthong transformed his life, devoting his time to education, attaining three associate degrees in social and behavioral science, general business, and American studies; leveraging his status among other prisoners to convince them to join the college program, increasing the attendance from 4 to 300; and
WHEREAS, Following his release, Lasaphangthong made numerous positive contributions to his community and society, moving to San Francisco, working as an Ambassador for Asian Prisoner Support Committee and Housing Manager for Family Bridges, cleaning streets in Oakland Chinatown and connecting homeless individuals with resources, and spearheading a campaign to successfully move 38 individuals from the streets into the Oak Street Community Cabins; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Following his release, Thongsy made numerous positive contributions to his community and society, beginning a fellowship at Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus (AAJC-ALC) as a Yuri Kochiyama Fellow, engaging in community outreach as a member of the Asian Prisoner Support Committee, being active in his church community and interfaith organizations, volunteering extensively in the Bay Area helping with...
re-entry support and teaching origami to youth, attending leadership workshops and
conferences, and promoting community justice and safety as a Campaigner/Coordinator at
the Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors herby directs
the Clerk of the Board to transmit copies to Federal and State Representatives in San
Francisco with a request to take all action necessary to achieve the objectives of this Resolution.
Resolution urging the Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, to grant Sakhone Lasaphangthong and Somdeng “Danny” Thongsy a full pardon to allow them to remain in the United States.

March 10, 2020 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 8 - Mandelman, Mar, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton and Yee
Absent: 3 - Fewer, Haney and Peskin

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 3/10/2020 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board