Resolution supporting California State Senate Bill No. 379, Residential Solar Energy Systems: Permitting, introduced by Senator Scott Wiener, that would require certain jurisdictions to provide an online instant solar permitting process for residential solar and solar-plus-storage energy systems.

WHEREAS, San Francisco’s 2021 Climate Action Plan establishes a goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, and specific goals in the energy sector of providing 100% renewable electricity by 2025 and 100% renewable energy by 2040; and

WHEREAS, The 2021 Climate Action Plan calls specifically for investing in local renewable energy and energy resilience and supporting the development of local renewable electricity production by scaling up programs such as net metering, community solar, feed-in tariffs, and battery storage; and

WHEREAS, Rooftop solar installations and battery storage support grid resilience in the face of public safety power shutoffs and other electricity grid disruptions caused by increasing wildfire risk and extreme weather events being driven by climate change; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission offers programs to ensure low-income residents and marginalized communities can participate equitably in the transition to clean energy, including through the GoSolarSF Program that provides incentives to install rooftop solar in low-income communities; and

WHEREAS, Existing state law requires a city or county to approve administratively applications to install solar energy systems through the issuance of a building permit or similar non-discretionary permit; and
WHEREAS, Existing law requires every city, county, or city and county to develop a streamlined permitting process for the installation of small residential rooftop solar energy systems, as that term is defined; and

WHEREAS, Existing law prescribes and limits permit fees that a city or county may charge for a residential and commercial solar energy system; and

WHEREAS, California State Senate Bill No. 379 would require every city, county, or city and county to implement an online, automated permitting platform that verifies code compliance and issues permits in real time for a solar energy system, as defined, that is no larger than 38.4 kilowatts alternating current nameplate rating and an energy storage system, as defined, paired with a solar energy system that is no larger than 38.4 kilowatts alternating current nameplate rating; and

WHEREAS, The bill would prescribe a compliance schedule for satisfying these requirements, with cities and counties with populations greater than 50,000 required to satisfy the requirements by September 30, 2023; and

WHEREAS, The bill would require a city, county, or city and county to report to the California Energy Commission (CEC) when it is in compliance with specified requirements, and to self-certify their compliance with the bill’s provisions when applying for specified funds from the CEC, as specified; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), a division of the U.S. Department of Energy, released free software called SolarAPP+ that cities and counties can adopt to process permits for residential solar energy systems; and

WHEREAS, The California Energy Commission is operating a program to deploy $20 million in grants to help cities and counties adopt online automated permitting systems such as SolarAPP+; and
WHEREAS, Jurisdictions such as Pleasant Hill, San Ramon, Sonoma County, Stockton, and Benicia have successfully deployed SolarAPP+ and San Jose, Los Angeles, Alameda County and Vacaville have adopted similar automated permitting software and reduced permit review time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco hereby urges passage of California State Senate Bill No. 379; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Department of Building Inspection, the San Francisco Fire Department, and other relevant permitting agencies to move swiftly to implement automated solar permitting platforms to reduce permit review time for solar energy and battery storage systems; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit copies of this resolution to San Francisco’s state legislative delegation, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins, Governor Gavin Newsom, and to the City Lobbyist upon passage.
Resolution supporting California State Senate Bill No. 379, Residential Solar Energy Systems: Permitting, introduced by Senator Scott Wiener, that would require certain jurisdictions to provide an online instant solar permitting process for residential solar and solar-plus-storage energy systems.

April 05, 2022 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 4/5/2022 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board