Resolution urging internet service providers, such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast, and similar companies to provide affordable internet connections to seniors and people with disabilities in San Francisco.

WHEREAS, Quality internet connection is inaccessible for many seniors and people with disabilities in San Francisco, and this impact is more severe for low-income, Black and brown people and immigrants; and

WHEREAS, With the shift to virtual programming at the beginning of the pandemic, and the isolation faced by many older people and disabled people, staying connected to the internet is essential for survival - applying for housing, accessing medical care, searching for services, and accessing social and educational activities; and

WHEREAS, The 2021 Empowered San Francisco Technology Needs Assessment of disabled and senior residents reports that 64% of survey respondents find lack of access to internet and digital technology as a barrier in accessing necessary public and COVID-related services; and 28% and 27% indicate unaffordable internet and unaffordable devices, respectively, as the top two barriers in getting connected; and

WHEREAS, Digital redlining in low-income housing and Black and brown neighborhoods restricts access to quality internet due to infrastructural barriers—which include outdated or lacking cables, limited digital exposure and training, as well as high cost and slow speed of broadband service; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo stated regarding the Biden-Harris Administration's Internet for All Initiative on July 13, 2022, that, "meaningful internet use and [providing] people with tools," must be provided along with basic access; and
WHEREAS, Governor Newsom stated in May 20, 2022, that California's success depends on broadband delivery and access to internet can make a difference between employment and unemployment; and

WHEREAS, California Emerging Technology Fund and the over 4,500 sponsors of the Digital Equity Bill of Rights declare that "Digital access is a 21st Century Civil Right," and must be a cornerstone of national, state and regional legislation and regulations to advance economic justice and prosperity for all; and

WHEREAS, Private corporations such as AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, and others hold a monopoly on the market and fail to adequately provide fast-speed and low-cost internet service options for senior and disabled people living in affordable housing and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Big network providers benefited from the promotion of online activities at the start of the pandemic, while such shifts exacerbated the impact of the digital divide in senior and disabled communities; and

WHEREAS, These network corporations rely on federal and state subsidy programs in order to provide poor-quality, albeit, discounted service for seniors and people with disabilities, which does not address the need of low-income communities in San Francisco, where low income, due to vast economic disparities, is designated as living under 80% AMI; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco call on big broadband providers such as AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, and similar companies to provide access to high-speed Wi-Fi services to seniors and people with disabilities at all low-income housing and BIPOC neighborhoods by expanding eligibility and adjusting costs for their low-income programs based on 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) to reflect needs in San Francisco; and, be it
FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco call on big broadband providers such as AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, and similar companies to end practices of digital redlining and increase the base speed for internet connection, by providing quality routers, extenders, and upgrading cables to meet fiber optic standards when appropriate; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco call on large broadband providers such as AT&T, Comcast, Verizon, and similar companies to provide simplified, quick enrollment accessible by phone, text, and online, as well as in person installment support for the discount programs for senior and disabled residents in a broad range of languages; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco transmit a copy of this Resolution to the AT&T, Verizon Wireless and Comcast Regional Offices, the San Francisco Field Office of the Federal Communication Commission, and the California Public Utilities Commission.
Resolution urging internet service providers, such as AT&T, Verizon, Comcast, and similar companies to provide affordable internet connections to seniors and people with disabilities in San Francisco.

March 16, 2023 Government Audit and Oversight Committee - RECOMMENDED

April 04, 2023 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 4/4/2023 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