[Urging the City to Develop Options to Minimize Postmortem Body Handling Costs During the COVID-19 Crisis]

Resolution urging the City and County of San Francisco to develop options to minimize post-death body handling costs and provide these options to the loved ones of people who die during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.

WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been rapidly spreading worldwide; and

WHEREAS, The virus, which was originally detected in December 2019, has reached pandemic proportions, with more than 1,965,561 confirmed cases that have resulted in over 123,722 deaths around the world; and

WHEREAS, As of Tuesday, April 14, 2020, the San Francisco Department of Public Health has reported at least 987 confirmed cases in San Francisco that have resulted in 15 deaths; and

WHEREAS, The death of a loved one is an extremely difficult, emotionally stressful event in normal times, and the COVID-19 shelter-in-place mandate has placed even greater emotional and financial burdens on the families of the deceased; and

WHEREAS, Due to strict public health orders, many patients dying in hospitals during this global health emergency must die alone because family members are prohibited from visiting general acute hospitals; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the regional and statewide shelter-in-place orders, thousands of working families have been furloughed or lost their jobs and are struggling to cover even basic needs such as food and housing; and
WHEREAS, The costs of retaining a funeral establishment and burial plot in the San Francisco Bay Area are prohibitively expensive, forcing many families to choose cremation; and

WHEREAS, The default cremation service retained by the City and County of San Francisco is not the most affordable service available to families; and

WHEREAS, The basic costs of handling a body post-death can be taxing for low-income families, especially if family members cannot work during the shelter-in-place mandate, and the City’s post-death body handling process includes Medical Examiner fees that could be avoided if certain steps that are not generally known are taken; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the City Administrator, in consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, to explore ways to minimize post-death body handling costs, and to develop and document clear options available to families who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, including a waiver of the basic body-handling fees during the declared state of emergency; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, These options should be available in multiple languages and immediately shared with the families of the deceased, enabling them to make informed decisions that minimize the financial burden of putting their loved ones to rest during this unprecedented and challenging COVID-19 public health crisis.
Resolution urging the City and County of San Francisco to develop options to minimize post-death body handling costs and provide these options to the loved ones of people who die during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.

April 21, 2020 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 11 - Fewer, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton and Yee

File No. 200382

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 4/21/2020 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