Resolution urging Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Public Utilities Commission to extend the utility shut-off moratorium past June 30, 2021, and forgive utility debt beginning March 2020.

WHEREAS, Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 nearly 47% of the California workforce has filed for unemployment insurance benefits and as of mid-February 2021, close to 1 in 5 workers in the state have claimed long-term unemployment, meaning they have collected unemployment insurance for over 26 weeks; and

WHEREAS, Residential customers of the four major California investor-owned energy utility (IOU) under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) entered the pandemic with $500 million in gas and electric utility debt, and that debt has now increased by over $650 million to a total of over $1 billion in December 2020, and approximately $324 million of the increase is owed by California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) or Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA) customers; and

WHEREAS, The City and County of San Francisco and its San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) have been leaders in providing support to utility customers, including suspending shutoffs prior to the state mandate, implementing residential and commercial emergency COVID discount programs, participating in national convenings, and leading legislative efforts to secure funding; and

WHEREAS, The SFPUC suspended the return of delinquent CleanPowerSF Customers to PG&E generation service for failure to pay CleanPowerSF charges and implemented a one-time $2.8 million customer assistance bill credit for low-income customers; and
WHEREAS, On April 27, 2021, the SFPUC will consider extension of the emergency customer assistance programs and rule changes described above, through March 2022; and

WHEREAS, The CPUC approved a utility shut off moratorium in March 2020 following the March 4, 2020 State of Emergency declaration by Governor Gavin Newsom until April 16, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Following a CPUC presentation at the COVID Impacts on Energy Customers Workshop in November 2020 that showed a dramatic increase in unpaid residential bills, on February 11, 2021, the CPUC approved to extend the moratorium until June 30, 2021; and

WHEREAS, As of March 29, 2021, CleanPowerSF’s residential customer bill delinquency more than 60 days overdue was $2,739,333 with highest percentage of delinquent customer accounts being in Districts 10 and 6, two districts with the highest poverty rates in San Francisco which have also been historically impacted by environmental harms including power generation and suffered from a lack of access to affordable and reliable energy; and

WHEREAS, Prior to shelter-in-place for COVID, 10% of active CleanPower SF customer accounts were enrolled in CARE, and as of October 1, 2020, 13.4% of all CleanPowerSF customers are enrolled in CARE or FERA, a 34% increase in the number of program participants since March 2020; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 598 (Hueso 2017) required CPUC to develop measures to reduce electric and gas disconnection rates by January 1, 2021, and in Decision 20-06-003, the CPUC adopted the Arrearage Management Program (AMP) which will relieve a qualifying customer’s past debt of up to $8,000 over a 12 month time period in exchange for paying current bills on time and in full; and
WHEREAS, A November 2020 report by the San Francisco Local Agency Formation
Commission, titled “Power is a Right: Preventing a Disconnection Crisis in San Francisco
During and After COVID-19” by Coro Fellow Adiba Khan, concluded that the CPUC’s decision
is insufficient to prevent utility debt accumulation during the moratorium, and prevent
disconnection after the moratorium ends; and

WHEREAS, On April 5, 2021, several advocacy groups including The Utility Reform
Network (TURN) asked Governor Gavin Newsom to protect utility ratepayers by allocating $2
billion of Federal COVID Emergency Funds or State surplus funds to utility customer debt
relief; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco
urges Governor Newsom and the CPUC to extend the power shut-off moratorium and provide
utility debt relief to residential and small commercial customers that prioritizes those most in
need; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
Francisco urges the office of Governor Newsom and the CPUC to advocate for the
development of funding sources and/or provide funding sources to support utility rate payer
relief programs; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
Francisco urges the SFPUC to continue to explore debt relief for its customers in preparation
that the Governor and CPUC do not take action, or in the event their action falls short of
providing the appropriate amount of relief; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
Francisco hereby directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the
office of Governor Newsom and the CPUC.
File Number: 210427 Date Passed: May 18, 2021

Resolution urging Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Public Utilities Commission to extend the utility shut-off moratorium past June 30, 2021, and forgive utility debt beginning March 2020.

May 06, 2021 Government Audit and Oversight Committee - RECOMMENDED

May 18, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED
Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 210427

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/18/2021 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

__________________________
Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

__________________________
05/28/2021
Date Approved

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

__________________________
05/28/2021
Date