Resolution supporting the non-violent activists facing prosecution in Sonoma County over their attempt to expose the conditions of animals in factory farms.

WHEREAS, California Penal Code, Section 597(b) makes it a crime to torture, torment, deprive of necessary sustenance, drink, or shelter any animal, or cause any animal to be so tortured, tormented, deprived of necessary sustenance, drink, or shelter, where the words “torment” and “torture” include “every act, omission, or neglect whereby unnecessary or unjustifiable physical pain or suffering is caused or permitted”; and

WHEREAS, California Penal Code, Section 597(e) makes it a crime to hold a domestic animal in confinement without providing the animal with sufficient food and water, and also provides a legal defense against the claim of trespass to anyone who enters the area where the domestic animal is confined for the purpose of providing food and water; and

WHEREAS, California’s animal cruelty statute, California Penal Code, Section 597 et seq., does not contain an animal husbandry exemption and thus covers cruelty inflicted on animals raised in commercial operations; and

WHEREAS, The public in California cares deeply about animals raised in commercial operations, as evidenced by, among other things, the passage by 62.66% of voters of Proposition 12 in 2018, which established new standards for confinement of farm animals and banned noncomplying products; and

WHEREAS, The increasingly massive scale of industrialization of modern commercial animal operations leads to increasing numbers of animals suffering from starvation or dehydration; and
WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the fact that leaving animals to starve to death violates industry standards and California law, commercial animal operations routinely allow animals to die of thirst or hunger when they are too sick or injured to reach food or water; and

WHEREAS, Many San Francisco consumers care deeply about animals and are willing to pay a significant premium to purchase animal products from suppliers they believe have treated animals humanely; and

WHEREAS, Companies that supply animal products have been known to portray their treatment of animals in a substantially more favorable light than the reality; and

WHEREAS, Little or no enforcement of California’s animal cruelty statute occurs with respect to animals raised in commercial operations; and

WHEREAS, Peaceful activists have attempted to bring violations by commercial animal operations of California’s animal cruelty statute to the attention of the public as well as law and regulatory enforcement agencies, including video and photographic evidence of animals caught in wire cages and left with large, untreated sores, and animals who had died of thirst, starvation, injury, or illness whose bodies were lying among the living; and

WHEREAS, 148 activists, some of whom are San Francisco residents, were arrested in Sonoma County while trying to document the conditions of commercial animal operations and rescue animals therein from thirst, starvation, injury, and illness; and

WHEREAS, Six of those activists currently face felony charges in Sonoma County in connection with those investigations and rescues, and an additional seven activists face misdemeanor charges for the same; and

WHEREAS, The act of investigating the conditions of commercial animal operations and exposing abuses to the public and to law enforcement, and providing relief to animals who are thirsty, starving, injured, or sick, is in the interests of both those individual animals and the public that cares about them; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors hereby declare that the 13 individuals being prosecuted in Sonoma County are non-violent activists who were investigating and attempting to expose the abuses of animals in commercial animal operations; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors encourage the Sonoma County District Attorney to dismiss such prosecution; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors encourage the Sonoma County District Attorney to devote the resources that could be saved from these actions to instead investigate and prosecute potential violations of the law in commercial animal operations in Sonoma County; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors encourage law and regulatory enforcement agencies in California, including the California Attorney General and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, to investigate and prosecute potential violations of the law in commercial animal operations throughout California; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urge the California State Legislature to pass laws expanding the protection of animals raised in commercial animal operations; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors affirm the commitment of the Board of Supervisors to the protection of all animals; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution shall be sent to Sonoma County District Attorney Jill Ravitch, Sonoma County Deputy District Attorney Robert Waner, Assembly Member David Chiu, Assembly Member Phil Ting, State Senator Scott Weiner, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Kamala Harris, and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra.
Resolution supporting the non-violent activists facing prosecution in Sonoma County over their attempt to expose the conditions of animals in factory farms.

May 28, 2020 Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee - RECOMMENDED

June 09, 2020 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Fewer, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani, Walton and Yee

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 6/9/2020 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