[Supporting Low-Income Rate Assistance Power Programs]

Resolution supporting a campaign to increase promotion and enrollment in San Francisco’s and California’s Low-Income Rate Assistance Power Programs.

WHEREAS, Ensuring that all San Franciscans and Californians continue to have access to clean and affordable electricity is critical to the ongoing livelihood and success of our residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is San Francisco’s clean energy utility and serves 70% of San Francisco’s electricity demand through its two retail customer programs - CleanPowerSF and Hetch Hetchy Power; and

WHEREAS, Pacific Gas and Electric serves the remaining 30% of San Francisco’s electricity demand; and

WHEREAS, The SFPUC’s CleanPowerSF is San Francisco’s not-for-profit, community choice energy program that provides clean, affordable electricity to more than 380,000 residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS, The SFPUC's Hetch Hetchy Power is the City’s publicly owned power utility, which provides 100 percent greenhouse gas free energy to public facilities, such as City Hall, San Francisco International Airport, Muni buses, schools, libraries, along with public housing and some private developments; and

WHEREAS, The SFPUC is committed to supporting its electricity customers, especially low-income customers, with access to financial assistance and support, including bill discount programs, flexible payment plans, and incentives for home energy upgrades, such as solar installation; and
WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic is causing and is expected to continue to cause serious negative impacts on the economy and financial impacts to residents, including loss of income due to loss of work hours or wages, layoffs, and business closures; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in unemployment and a decrease in household income in every county of California. In the City and County of San Francisco, as of September 18, 2020 the current unemployment rate is 8.8%; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place orders have resulted in higher residential energy bills due to more residents at home during the day; and

WHEREAS, Since the City’s Shelter-in-Place order began, San Francisco residents are using about 9 percent more electricity compared to previous months, and many are facing economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, A decrease in income in addition to an increase in home energy bills has perpetuated an already serious problem of energy burden for low-income households; and

WHEREAS, An energy burden is the percentage of income that is spent on energy bills, and high energy burdens persist in low-income homes as a result of households allocating a disproportionate amount of their income towards utility-related expenses; and

WHEREAS, low-income households are at higher risk of being disconnected from utility service for non-payment; and

WHEREAS, Previously Pacific Gas and Electric Company had the second highest disconnection rate in comparison to other utility companies in California; and

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, Mayor London Breed issued the Second Supplement to Mayoral Proclamation Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency temporarily suspending: (a) the discontinuation or shut off of power service for SFPUC Hetch Hetchy Power Customers in San Francisco for non-payment of power bills, (b) the imposition of late payment penalties or fees for delinquent Hetch Hetchy Power Customer accounts, and (c) the
WHEREAS, On July 28th, the SFPUC via Commission Resolution No. 20-0162 extended the temporary suspension of: (a) the discontinuation or shut off of power service for SFPUC Hetch Hetchy Power Customers in San Francisco for non-payment of power bills, (b) the imposition of late payment penalties or fees for delinquent Hetch Hetchy Power Customer accounts, and (c) the return of delinquent CleanPowerSF Customers to PG&E generation service for failure to pay CleanPowerSF charges until January 2021; and

WHEREAS, The California Public Utilities Commission instituted a moratorium that prohibits disconnections for non-payment until April 2021 for all residential households due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, In May, the SFPUC launched an Emergency Customer Assistance Program for water, sewer, and Hetch Hetchy Power customers to provide monthly bill discounts for those financially impacted by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Hetch Hetchy Power changed the income eligibility requirements for the existing Customer Assistance Program (CAP) so that all tenants living in affordable housing would qualify, of which the Regular CAP and the Emergency CAP provides a 30% monthly discount on electricity bills, and has been extended through the end of 2020 to increase enrollment; and

WHEREAS, After Hetch Hetchy Power changed the income eligibility requirements of CAP, all tenants were auto enrolled; and

WHEREAS, In July, the SFPUC launched a $3 million bill relief credit program for CleanPowerSF customers enrolled in either the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) or Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) discount programs offered by the State; and
WHEREAS, The CleanPowerSF bill relief credit program benefited more than 48,000 low-income customers and provided one-time credits of $50 for single-family homes, $3,000 for multi-family residential buildings and $750 for nonprofit or small commercial accounts—the equivalent to a month’s worth of savings on the average customer’s electricity bill; and

WHEREAS, The SFPUC continues to proactively engage, inform, and educate customers about available financial assistance, such as the Emergency Customer Assistance Program and the CARE/FERA bill discount programs, through multilingual marketing and advertising campaigns targeted to low-income customers, Limited English Proficient (LEP) customers, customers behind on their bills, and communities most affected by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Since March, the SFPUC has directly reached more than 200,000 electricity customers through multilingual print and digital advertisements, neighborhood billboards, direct mail, e-mail notifications, posters, flyers, and partnerships with community-based organizations; and

WHEREAS, Since March, more than 6,000 customers have benefited from the Emergency Customer Assistance Program, and CleanPowerSF customer enrollment in the CARE/FERA program has increased by 30%; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in low-income rate assistance programs such as Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA) and Medical Baseline are crucial now more than ever; and

WHEREAS, Pacific Gas and Electric Company is required to administer federal and state programs such as CARE, FERA, and Medical Baseline that provide eligible customers with monthly discounts on home energy bills ranging from 18% to 30%; and

WHEREAS, While income qualified households may also apply for one-time financial assistance through federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), these funds are very limited; and
WHEREAS, Similar to other LIHEAP Service Providers in California, San Francisco-Peninsula Energy Services, a LIHEAP, is only able to help less than 6% of eligible households each year with available LIHEAP funding; and

WHEREAS, San Francisco-Peninsula Energy Services and other LIHEAPs advocate for low-income households to apply for low-income rate assistance programs offered by Pacific Gas and Electric Company and is supported by many partners to prevent utility disconnections and minimize economic hardships; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The San Francisco Board of Supervisors supports organizations serving those in need by actively encouraging low-income constituents to apply for California’s low-income rate assistance programs such as California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA), and/or Medical Baseline Allowance; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors hereby formally urges the SFPUC to continue its engagement in the California Public Utilities Commission’s proceedings that address affordability and disconnections; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors encourages the SFPUC to continue to promote energy equity while supporting CleanPowerSF customers, particularly low-income and LEP customers by regularly informing them of special consumer protections and ways to lower their bills; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC’s CleanPowerSF Program to continue outreach efforts through multilingual print and digital marketing and advertising; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the SFPUC’s not for profit, Hetch Hetchy Power, to continue to serve the public and work towards meeting the
needs of the local community and continue to bring significant financial relief to customers
during this stressful time; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors reaffirms its commitment to
low-income customers and supports the work of community serving organizations like San
Francisco-Peninsula Energy Services to increase enrollment in low-income rate assistance
programs in the Bay Area and throughout California; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors urges the
California Public Utilities Commission to take continued action to support ratepayers,
especially low-income ratepayers, during and after the COVID-19 emergency, and provide the
necessary oversight to ensure ratepayers have access to needed financial assistance and do
not experience service disconnections during this time; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to Mission Housing,
Episcopal Community Services SF, Human Good, Sequoia Living, Open House-SF, TODCO,
Catholic Charities SF, On Lok, YWCA (Young Women Christian Association), and YMCA of
San Francisco; social service organizations working with low-income populations to bring
awareness to California’s California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), Family Electric Rate
Assistance Program (FERA), and Medical Baseline Allowance programs; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the SFPUC
Commission and the California Public Utilities Commission.
Resolution

File Number:  201196                      Date Passed: October 27, 2020

Resolution supporting a campaign to increase promotion and enrollment in San Francisco’s and California’s Low-Income Rate Assistance Power Programs.

October 27, 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 10/27/2020 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

London N. Breed
Mayor

11/6/2020
Date Approved

11/06/2020
Date