

RESOLUTION NO. _____

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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RESOLUTION DECLARING THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO AN “AUTISM-FRIENDLY” COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, 1 in 24 children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in the state of California. Autism Spectrum Disorder affects all nationalities, all creeds, all religions, all races, and all genders. Those, diagnosed and undiagnosed, make up 1% of San Mateo County’s population; and

WHEREAS, Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, sensory, and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to challenging. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less; and

WHEREAS, research has found that families of children with special needs, particularly ASD, are less likely to frequent public places and have higher levels of stress and strain compared to families with typically developing children; and

WHEREAS, accommodations for people with many types of disabilities are commonplace and seen throughout the community in businesses, schools, offices, theaters, etc. – e.g., ramps, automatic doors, and braille on signs. The disabilities that

impact individuals with ASD and sensory processing issues, however, often can't be seen and providing accommodations in the community is not as widespread; and

WHEREAS, many ASD-focused organizations highlight the importance and benefits of community inclusion for individuals with ASD. Making modifications, as appropriate and when possible, to places or events to alleviate some types of sensory distress can expand opportunities for individuals with ASD to participate in the community; and

WHEREAS, national and local organizations across the country provide businesses, organizations, local attractions, and local communities with recommendations on how to make spaces and programming more inclusive and inviting for individuals with ASD and/or other sensory processing issues; and

WHEREAS, modifications in public or business spaces includes, but is not limited to, expedited or support check-outs or alternatives to standing in line, lower volume music or allowing use of noise-canceling headphones, providing gluten-free and casein-free options, minimizing strobe or flashing lights or ensuring lighting is not too glaring or not too dark, using fragrance-free cleaners or air purifiers, providing social narratives/pre-visit materials, and allowing guests to walk around, talk, and/or leave/re-enter a venue or place; and

WHEREAS, "autism-friendly" is defined as being aware of social engagement and environmental factors affecting people on the autism spectrum; and

WHEREAS, an “autism-friendly” community will encourage residents and businesses to be more understanding, patient, and inclusive of people with autism and their families; and

WHEREAS, the County of San Mateo prides itself on being an inclusive county;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County declares the County of San Mateo as an “autism-friendly” community and encourages residents and businesses to be understanding of the diverse needs of people with autism and their families.

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