

RESOLUTION NO. .

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

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**RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
TO SUPPORT A DIGITAL BILL OF RIGHTS THAT WILL INCREASE DIGITAL EQUITY
FOR ALL RESIDENTS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY**

RESOLVED, by the Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo, State
California, that

WHEREAS, the Digital Bill of Rights addresses the digital divide that has been highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital divide is a gap that creates inequity between a group that has access to a working computer and high-speed internet and a group who lacks computer access and high-speed internet. According to an American Civil Liberties Union report “The Public Internet Option,” 72% of white households have access to broadband, compared to 54% of African American households and 50% of Hispanic households. Only 54% of households with incomes below \$20,000 have home internet compared with 90% of households with above \$100,000; and

WHEREAS, in the study “Internet Connectivity and the ‘Digital Divide’ in California — 2019”, the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) in partnership with the University of California, Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) found that 12% or one in eight homes still do not have access to high speed internet due to both geographic and economic reasons; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 1 million students in California were lacking either computer or internet access in 2020 during the pandemic. “The Broadband Internet Access” by the Legislative Analyst’s Office states that although 97% of California households have access to broadband, many lack a high-speed connection that is fast

enough to support multiple people in one household, or lack the financial means to subscribe to the level of service needed to access online education; and

WHEREAS, based on the 2020 COVID-19 Needs Assessment Survey conducted by John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, an estimated 15-30% of students in Redwood City lack internet access and 20-40% lack a home computer; and

WHEREAS, telemedicine or telehealth is the use of real time interactive audio and video in order to deliver care at a distance to a patient and has been crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for older adults; and

WHEREAS, because access to telehealth services is dependent on internet availability and speed, as well as individual proficiency navigating the internet, accessing telehealth has been a challenge for underserved communities, including seniors; and

WHEREAS, only 51% of Americans 65 and older have internet access in their households and only 42% have a cell phone and fewer have a smart phone. (Scholarly Article: Telemedical Services During COVID-19: Considerations for Medically Underserved Populations); and

WHEREAS, the Digital Bill of Rights is intended to close the digital divide and increase digital equity to all residents. It is critical for civic participation, employment, education, health, access to essential services and an overall better quality of life.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors supports the Digital Bill of Rights that will increase equity for all residents in San Mateo County, with the following components:

1. Broadband should be reliable – Broadband should be fast and reliable for all households; and
2. Digital literacy and education – Educational opportunities should be provided to seniors and those of low-income households for all residents to have an equal opportunity to succeed; and
3. Access to a reliable computer or tablet – All residents should have access to, either through rental or ownership, a computer or tablet free of cost for school purposes, job browsing, housing opportunities, submitting applications, as well as access to telehealth and government resources; and
4. Affordable Broadband - Broadband that is priced based on income level not on the internet speed; and
5. Public WIFI - Access to public WIFI for all residents in the County of San Mateo regardless of income or geographic location; and
6. Broadband and Public WIFI that supports small businesses; and
7. Broadband and Public WIFI that encourages government participation; and
8. Access to tech support during emergencies such as a pandemic; and
9. Public Housing providers to offer free broadband or resources on internet options to residents; and
10. Access to telemedicine/telehealth – all residents should have the option of telehealth regardless of status; and
11. Set aside County funding to address the broadband and Public WIFI needs of San Mateo County residents.

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