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Media Contact: [Alison.Simard@lacity.org](mailto:Alison.Simard@lacity.org) or 323-445-8402

## **Councilmember Koretz Introduces Ordinance Demanding Steep Penalties to Enforce Urgent Mask-Wearing in Public**

Los Angeles, CA – July 29, 2020 – Councilmember Paul Koretz today introduced a motion asking the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance with an urgency clause that would require payment of increasingly steeper fines for failure to comply with the Mayor’s “SAFER L.A.” Emergency Order to wear a mask outside the home, to be enforced by any City of Los Angeles agencies with authority to do so, in order to mitigate the ongoing and concerning spread of COVID-19. The first violation would result in a \$100 penalty, followed by a \$250 citation for the second violation, and \$500 for the third and subsequent violations.

California’s COVID-19 cases continue to rise more than four months into the pandemic. The daily new cases in California eclipsed 10,000 for the first time on July 21. Los Angeles County has upwards of 170,000 cases, and currently has had more cases than all but 17 countries in the world. This trend will continue if more aggressive action is not taken to enforce preventive measures. Various levels of government have instituted mask ‘requirements’ throughout Los Angeles County, but none have been strictly enforced in the City of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health noted that young people account for roughly 57 percent of new COVID-19 cases as of July 21. Many of these cases could have been avoided if mask requirements were taken more seriously. Despite overwhelming evidence of the benefits of masks and the ubiquity of calls to wear them, the attitude toward masks for many people spans from flippant to dangerously skeptical. These attitudes and the anti-mask rhetoric, are costing lives.

“I’ve been a strong proponent of residents wearing masks to protect themselves and others from contracting the disease since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. I’m glad that the Mayor has added the requirement to his Safer LA Order, but it is past time to actually enforce mask-wearing if people will not protect themselves, their families and their neighbors, especially the most vulnerable,” said Los Angeles Councilmember Paul Koretz. “If we want to successfully reopen our businesses and get back to close to normal lives, it will never happen without a vaccine (which could be many months or years from now) or universal wearing of masks.” He further pointed out, “While the County’s recent announcement to strongly enforce proper business protocols is a good step, we have to enforce mask-wearing by individuals, as well. At this point, it seems that issuing tickets might be the only way to save more lives. The soft consequence of a ticket might be the key to avoid the very dangerous consequences of contracting COVID-19. Such a modest act would save thousands of lives and move us toward controlling this epidemic. So we must make it happen.”

The motion further points out, “A well-enforced mask mandate would, at the very least, cause people to take mask wearing more seriously, which would help to slow the spread of the coronavirus. There is no reason that California should have ever been the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic.”