



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Alison.Simard@lacity.org, (213) 505-7467

Councilmember Koretz Introduces Resolution in Opposition to Administrative Action By The LA District Attorney Gascón to Cease Seeking Sentencing Enhancements in Hate Crime Cases

Los Angeles - December 15, 2020 - Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz (CD5) today introduced a resolution in opposition to District Attorney George Gascón recent Special Directive to remove sentence enhancements when prosecuting hate crimes. Councilmember Bob Blumenfield provided the second for the Resolution.

On December 7th, the new DA issued a set of Special Directives designed to reduce recidivism and the number of people incarcerated in our prisons. One of those Special Directives puts forth a policy to eliminate all sentence enhancements, which he believes are a relic of the “tough on crime” period in California in the 1980s and 1990s. Unfortunately, this policy will also apply to hate crimes, which are those crimes committed because of the victim’s actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

Hate crimes, including violent hate crimes, have increased significantly over recent years across the United States in general and in Los Angeles in particular. Pointing to research done by the LA Human Rights Commission, Councilmember Koretz points out that 2019 saw the highest number of violent hate crimes in Los Angeles in a decade, with white supremacist crimes jumping 38 percent, and those targeting the transgender community increasing by 64 percent from 2018. In addition, 24 percent of all hate crimes committed in the County during 2019 targeted African Americans, with the majority of these crimes being violent in nature, which is the most targeted group and is disproportionate to the percent African Americans are part of the County’s population, which is 9%. Hate crimes targeting Jewish Americans have also increased significantly in recent years, as well.

“While many of his Special Directives are well-intentioned, I believe he missed the mark when he eliminated special enhancements for hate crimes being prosecuted in the County,” said Councilmember Koretz. “One of the real-life consequences is that the DA will no longer be seeking to add an enhancement to any sentence prosecutors obtain in the case of a vicious anti-transgender attack (robbery and assault) that occurred in Hollywood in late August, at a time when we are seeing a record number of hate crimes directed towards this community.”

“That is why this morning I introduced a Resolution asking that we oppose the Special Directive unless amended to reinstate sentencing enhancements for hate crimes,” said Koretz. “Ending the use of hate crime enhancements by prosecutors, I believe, would have far-reaching effects and likely result in a majority of serious hate crimes perpetrated in Los Angeles county being charged as if only the underlying crime mattered, and not the motivation for which the crime was committed.”