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# MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** STAFF IN THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

**FROM:** MAYOR KAREN BASS

**SUBJECT:** ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 30, 2023

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I promised the people of Los Angeles that my administration would work to restore the public's faith in the integrity of our City government. As we finalize the restructuring and staffing of our office, it is critical that we take steps to ensure that everyone performs their work serving the people of Los Angeles with the highest degree of ethics and integrity. To achieve this, I am announcing several office initiatives.

### **Mayor's Ethics Officer**

In May, I appointed Ruth Kwon, our Deputy Counsel, to serve as the first-ever Mayor's Ethics Officer. As Ethics Officer, Ms. Kwon will work to ensure that Mayor's Office staff faithfully complies with all ethics rules and disclosure requirements. She will organize training courses and be available to meet with any member of our staff who has a question relating to ethics and government transparency.

Ms. Kwon will also work on ethics matters for the City at-large, especially for City boards, commissions, and departments. She will work closely with our ethics partners, including the City Attorney's Office and the Ethics Commission. She will assess the ethics rules and look for ways to improve compliance. Her review will also consider potential changes to make the ethics rules more effective to increase the accountability of our City government to the people of Los Angeles.

### **Mayor's Office Ethics Pledge**

The Mayor's Office must lead the way. That is why I am instituting a mandatory Ethics Pledge for every member of the Mayor's Office. By this Pledge, we formally commit to the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and accountability. Adherence to the Ethics Pledge will be a condition of service in the Mayor's Office, and failure to adhere to the Ethics Pledge may result in corrective action, including termination.

### **Annual Ethics Training**

Our ethics laws set the minimum standards, and we must strive to exceed them. As such, all staff will be required to attend annual in-person ethics training sessions organized by our Ethics Officer and staff of the Ethics Commission. This training requirement will be in addition to, and not meant to replace, the online ethics training course administered by the Ethics Commission, and required to be taken every two years pursuant to state law.

### **Letters of Support**

The Mayor's Office receives many requests for letters signed by Mayor's staff or me to support various organizations as they raise funds or seek grants, and each must be thoughtfully and thoroughly reviewed. Staff should refrain from raising the expectation of the organization seeking the support before the request is approved. If the letter of support is to be sent to a governmental entity or official, please submit the request to Joey Freeman, Deputy Mayor of Intergovernmental Affairs. For all other letters of support (e.g., to foundations or private philanthropists), please submit the request to Jenny Delwood, Deputy Chief of Staff. Please submit the request on the appropriate form and give Deputy Mayor Freeman and Deputy Chief Delwood at least five working days lead time to review the request.

### **Solicitation of Funds**

Staff should not solicit funds from a third party to support a City program, including a program of the Mayor's Office. Exceptions must be approved in advance by the Chief of Staff. This policy only applies to staff acting in their official City capacity. It does not apply when a member of staff is soliciting funds on their own time and for a matter that is not related to City government, including the Mayor's Office. For example, a member of staff may help in the fundraising campaign of their house of worship, but be mindful to do so without referencing their position in the Mayor's Office.

### **City Leadership in Ethics**

Finally, as we make progress toward a more accountable City government, we will share our knowledge and best practices with other city mayors around the world. Los Angeles is a member of the Brookings Institution's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Leadership Cities Network. Staff members have been working with Brookings senior fellows, including Ambassador Norman Eisen, who served as President Obama's ethics czar and Tony Pippa, who heads the Brookings Network.

The United Nations' SDG Goal Number 16 is to "[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

This goal can only be achieved if we, as public servants, are willing to hold ourselves to a high ethical standard and willing to develop tools to make ourselves more accountable to the people we serve.

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**ADDENDUM I: ETHICS PLEDGE**

I support Mayor Karen Bass’s commitment to the highest standards of ethics, transparency, and accountability in City government. To protect the public trust in the integrity of City government, I pledge to adhere to the principles below at all times during my service to the City of Los Angeles:

1. I pledge to act solely in the public interest and avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. I will base all of my policy, personnel, and other official decisions on the best interests of the City of Los Angeles and its people. Neither my political affiliation, nor my personal relationships, including those with my family, nor the interests of private parties, including lobbyists and developers, will influence my work for the City of Los Angeles.
2. I pledge to take full responsibility for learning and complying with all laws and rules governing the standards of ethical conduct for public officials, including gift restrictions, revolving door restrictions, disclosure requirements, and campaign finance limitations.
3. I pledge to participate in an annual in-person ethics training organized by the Mayor’s Ethics Officer and the Counsel to the Mayor, in cooperation with staff of the City Ethics Commission.
4. I pledge to obtain approval before sending a letter of support signed by the Mayor or the Mayor’s Office.
5. I pledge to obtain approval before using my official City position to solicit funds from a third party.
6. I pledge to disclose to the Mayor’s Ethics Officer, on request, any information relating to my ongoing compliance with all state and City ethics laws. I also pledge to timely inform the Mayor’s Ethics Officer as well as any required investigative body if I become aware of any violation or perceived violation of state or City ethics laws.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND ASSENT TO ENFORCEMENT**

I agree to comply with this Ethics Pledge. I understand that the terms of this pledge are in addition to any other legal restrictions applicable to me by virtue of my service to the City of Los Angeles. I further understand that any violation of this Ethics Pledge may result in corrective action, including termination of employment.

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ PRINT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_