



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations  
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

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## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

April 8, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

***Docket #0304, Ordinance codifying the Office of Food Justice in the City of Boston.***

This matter was sponsored by Councilor Gabriela Coletta Zapata and was referred to the Committee on January 29, 2025.

### ***Summary of Legislation***

***Docket #0304*** is an ordinance to formally codify the Office of Food Justice into City law. While the Office already exists, this legislation would provide critical protections—ensuring its mission and operations are preserved regardless of future changes in leadership or budget priorities. Codifying the Office would establish its role as a permanent fixture in the City’s commitment to food access and equity. More than just food distribution, this legislation affirms that food justice is a fundamental right—central to public health, policy development, and long-term city planning.

### ***Information Received at Hearing***

The Committee held a working session on April 8, 2025 to discuss Docket #0304. During the working session the Chair noted that the effort to formally establish the Office of Food Justice was first introduced through the Food Recovery Ordinance. Since that time, the City has made meaningful progress, including the launch of the Greater Boston Collaborative Food Access Hub—an initiative originally funded through a federal ARPA grant. With this ordinance, the aim is to build on that momentum by formally codifying the office and securing a dedicated budget to help protect and advance food justice efforts.

Aliza Wasserman, Director of the Office of Food Justice explained that through the edits her office provided to the ordinance, the intention was to ensure the ordinance’s purpose aligns with the mission and work of the existing office. She emphasized that the office serves to connect the dots between various food access initiatives—whether community-led, federally or state-supported, or City-run programs and policies. Director Wasserman also highlighted that the Office of Food Justice serves as a key coordinator across several City departments—such as Age Strong and Boston Public Schools—that are responsible for implementing various food access programs. While these departments manage the administration of food services, the Office of Food Justice plays a pivotal role in aligning and supporting their efforts.

### ***Summary of Amendments***

The Ordinance as amended inserts language regarding sustainability and the role of the office in supporting city, state, federal, and community-led programs that enhance and build services, as amended, this section shall read in full as follows:



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Section 1. Purpose: *The purpose of this ordinance is to formally create the Office of Food Justice, which will work to build an equitable, resilient, sustainable and just food system and to improve accessibility and affordability of nutritious, fresh food in Boston. Every resident in the City should have access to nutritious food, and that food should be affordable, easy to find, and reflect the many cultures of the City of Boston. The Office of Food Justice shall support City, state, federal and community led programs and initiatives that build food security and increase access to culturally relevant food that reflects the diversity of Boston residents.*

The Ordinance as amended strikes language about the Director administering food programs. As amended, this section shall read in full as follows:

Section 2. Appointment of Director: *The Mayor shall appoint a Director to oversee the Office of Food Justice.*

The Ordinance as amended removes references to the office administering specific programs and instead clarifies the office's duties. As amended, this section shall read in full as follows:

Section 3. Duties of the Office of Food Justice.

1. *Implement and administer programs and projects related to its purpose*
2. *Monitor and conduct research and analysis on local, state, and federal laws, policies that impact food access for Boston residents and Boston's food system;*
3. *Advise and assist the Mayor in developing and implementing policies designed to build a resilient, equitable, just and sustainable food system and tackle food insecurity;*
4. *Make recommendations and provide coordination and support to City departments and agencies that administer food security, nutrition and agriculture programs; and*
5. *Perform community outreach to accomplish its goals; and shall promulgate all rules necessary to effectuate the purposes of this legislation.*

The remaining Sections were not subject to additional changes.

## **Committee Chair Recommended Action**

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT.**

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair  
Committee on Government Operations