

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, COLETTA ZAPATA,
FERNANDES ANDERSON, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPÉN,
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CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

AN ORDINANCE CODIFYING THE
OFFICE OF RETURNING CITIZENS

WHEREAS, The City of Boston is committed to supporting the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals, referred to as returning citizens, by ensuring equitable access to services and opportunities that promote successful reentry; *and*

WHEREAS, Returning citizens face unique challenges in areas such as employment, housing, health care, and education that require targeted support; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston recognizes the need for a dedicated office to advocate for and coordinate services for returning citizens in order to promote public safety, reduce recidivism, and improve community well-being; *and*

WHEREAS, Establishing the Office of Returning Citizens will ensure the provision of comprehensive reentry services and foster collaboration between city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community partners; **NOW, THEREFORE**

Be it ordained by the City Council of Boston as follows:

That the City of Boston Code, Chapter V, is amended by adding the following new section and subsections:

SECTION 1. Purpose

There is hereby established within the City of Boston the Office of Returning Citizens, which shall provide support services for the formerly incarcerated to ensure their successful reintegration into the community. The Office shall work to promote equitable access to services and opportunities in the areas of employment, housing, health care, education, and social services.

SECTION 2. Duties of the Office

The Office of Returning Citizens shall:

- Serve as an advocate for returning citizens by addressing barriers to reintegration, including employment, housing, legal aid, and access to health and mental health services.

- Coordinate reentry services across City departments, nonprofit organizations, and community partners to ensure returning citizens have access to the necessary resources.
- Develop and promote programs that support the employment and workforce development of returning citizens, including partnerships with employers, job training programs, and CORI-friendly employment opportunities.
- Assist returning citizens in securing stable housing through partnerships with housing providers and programs such as the Department of Corrections' housing voucher initiative.
- Ensure access to health care services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, by coordinating with health care providers, insurance services, and community health organizations.
- Promote financial independence by offering financial literacy programs, entrepreneurship opportunities, and assistance with accessing financial services.
- Engage with local communities and stakeholders to raise awareness of the challenges faced by returning citizens and encourage public participation in supporting reentry initiatives.
- Collect and maintain data on returning citizens served by the Office and provide an annual report to the Mayor and the City Council, detailing the Office's activities, outcomes, and recommendations for policy or program changes.

SECTION 3. Executive Director

The Office of Returning Citizens shall be headed by an Executive Director, who shall be appointed by the Mayor. The Executive Director shall:

- Serve as the principal advisor to the Mayor and the City Council on matters related to the reintegration of returning citizens.
- Oversee the daily operations of the Office, including staff management, budgeting, and the implementation of reentry programs.
- Establish partnerships with public and private organizations to enhance the services provided to returning citizens.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant laws and policies and advocate for legislative changes to improve outcomes for returning citizens.

SECTION 4. Severability

The provisions of this ordinance are severable, and if any provision, or portion thereof, is held to be unconstitutional or otherwise invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 5. Effective Date

This ordinance shall take effect 90 days after passage.