



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice

Henry Santana, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

November 19, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice was referred the following dockets for consideration:

Docket #1661, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Eighty Thousand Dollars (\$80,000.00) in the form of a grant for the DMH FY26 Co-Response Grant, awarded by the MA Department of Mental Health to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund one full-time recovery coach through BEST.

Docket #1662, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) in the form of a grant for the FY26 DMH Training Grant, awarded by the MA Department of Mental Health to be administered by the Police Department. The grant will fund overtime costs to backfill the Crisis Intervention Team training and other mental health training for officers.

These matters were sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu, and were referred to the Committee on July 17, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Dockets #1661-1662, are grants awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health for FY26, to be administered by the Boston Police Department to fund costs relevant to the Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST) and the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

Docket #1661, is a ‘Co-Response Grant’ awarded to fund one full-time recovery coach through the Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST).

Docket #1662, is a ‘Training Grant’ awarded to fund overtime costs to backfill CIT training and other mental health training for officers.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a joint hearing with the Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, on Dockets #1346 and #1661-1662. The Committees heard testimony from representatives of the Boston Police Department, Jenna Savage, Deputy Director of the Office of Research and Development, and Lieutenant Peter Messina of the Street Outreach Unit, testifying on behalf of the Administration.

The Administration explained that Dockets #1661-#1662 are grants that support essential components of the City’s mental-health and crisis-response infrastructure, with each serving a distinct operational purpose. It was explained that Docket #1661 will fund the Department’s peer-specialist position, which is designed for an individual with lived experience in mental health and substance-use recovery who can



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accompany officers during calls, support residents in crisis, assist with immediate service navigation, and participate in HUB Table meetings across the city. With respect to Docket #1662, the Administration explained that the grant will fund overtime backfill, allowing officers to attend the full 40-hour CIT training or other mental-health-related instruction without disrupting district staffing.

Councilors questioned the Administration on how long the department has been receiving mental-health response grants and whether their use has expanded following legislative efforts to develop alternative response models. The Administration explained that co-response grants have been awarded for more than a decade and that the peer-specialist funding has been adapted as program needs have evolved. With respect to the peer specialist position funded under Docket #1661, Councilors asked how the position functions when filled. The Administration explained that the specialist works across districts, participates regularly in HUB Table meetings, accompanies officers when appropriate, and helps residents navigate services based on lived experience. With respect to Docket #1662, the backfill overtime grant, Councilors asked the Administration to provide more details about the purpose of the grant. The Administration stated that the purpose of the grant is to ensure that districts remain fully staffed while officers receive specialized mental-health and de-escalation training, emphasizing that the grant will directly increase officer participation in specialized training, support the growing demand for mental-health response skills, and ensure district coverage remains stable while officers are temporarily reassigned for training.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice, 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**.

Henry A. Santana

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