

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR BRIAN WORRELL AND JULIA MEJIA



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXPLORE WAYS OF USING MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS TO HOST CHILDCARE CENTERS

WHEREAS, The high cost of childcare forces many Boston families to reduce work hours, leave the workforce altogether, or struggle to make ends meet; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston childcare costs an average of \$3,648 a month, according to the Department of Labor Women's Bureau, which is more than half the average gross monthly salary of \$6,216 for someone working in Boston, more than the average \$2,999 monthly mortgage payment, and nearly triple the average \$1,325 monthly payment for in-state college tuition at UMass Boston; *and*

WHEREAS, Per the Office of Early Childhood's 2021 Child Care Census Survey, Boston's average childcare center costs exceed the state average, contributing to Massachusetts having the second-highest center-based childcare costs in the nation; *and*

WHEREAS, Many childcare centers closed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and, as of 2024, Boston had an estimated 37,000 children ages 0 to 5 but only 24,895 licensed childcare seats citywide, leaving thousands of families without access to care; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston owns at least 124 municipal buildings, yet only a limited number currently host early learning or childcare centers; *and*

WHEREAS, Several Boston Public Schools are expected to close as part of a long-term consolidation process, presenting an opportunity to repurpose underutilized buildings for childcare use; *and*

WHEREAS, The City continues to construct new municipal facilities, which should be designed to accommodate childcare centers as part of long-term community infrastructure planning; *and*

WHEREAS, While the City has taken steps to improve early learning infrastructure, including Mayor Michelle Wu's Executive Order providing policy guidance for Inclusion of Daycare Facilities (IDF) zoning, these efforts have not met the full scale of Boston's childcare needs; *and*

WHEREAS, While the Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF) offers some support through its City Hall Childcare Program, the program has a waitlist, and most of the Department's other facilities do not utilize their space for child cares, despite having previously done so; *and*

WHEREAS, Roughly 81% of women in Boston who are parents or caretakers of young children were more likely than working fathers to reduce their hours or leave the workforce altogether to care for children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic; *and*

WHEREAS, The number of young children aged (5) five years and under who resided in Boston between 2017-20 declined 10 percent, some of which is a direct reflection of high childcare costs forcing families to leave as they seek affordable childcare elsewhere, according to American Community Survey results; *and*

WHEREAS, Expanding childcare spaces in municipal buildings could significantly reduce space costs for childcare operators, allowing savings to be passed on to families and increasing the number of available seats; *and*

WHEREAS, New York City and New York State leaders recently announced significant investments to expand universal early childhood care, including plans to provide free childcare for 2-year-olds and to strengthen universal pre-K access, demonstrating how municipal and state partnerships can expand affordable care for families; *and*

WHEREAS, These efforts in New York reflect a broader recognition that publicly supported childcare and early learning programs are essential for workforce stability, gender equity, and family economic participation, offering a model for how cities can rethink and expand access to childcare; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston must consider similar strategies to expand childcare facilities and services in municipal buildings to support families, employers, and the city's economic health; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council convene a hearing to explore how the City can strengthen its childcare infrastructure by opening early learning and childcare centers in municipal buildings across Boston, and that representatives from the Boston Centers for Youth and Families, Boston Public Schools, Property Management, Public Facilities, the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Office of Early Childhood, and other relevant parties be invited to attend and testify..