

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, JOHN FITZGERALD, ED FLYNN, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, FERNANDES ANDERSON, MURPHY, WEBER, WORRELL, LOUIJEUNE AND MEJIA



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS PUBLIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES RELATED TO THE CRISES OF MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE, AND HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY CONCENTRATED IN THE AREA OF MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE AND MELNEA CASS BOULEVARD

WHEREAS, Like other cities, Boston has long faced the challenges of the intersecting and evolving regional and nationwide crises of homelessness and housing instability, opioid addiction and substance use disorder, and mental health, with additional more recent complications as these crises intersect with an increasing influx of migrants, and added strains on the state shelter system and limited resources for mental and physical health; *and,*

WHEREAS, While these issues are broad in nature, and not distinctive to either Boston or any one locale, a confluence of factors has historically and presently caused a concentrated impact of these issues in the area of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard, with exceptional public health, public safety, and quality of life effects on the residents, businesses, workers, visitors, and those seeking services in that area; *and,*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has taken actions to address these situations as they have evolved over many years, and the Boston City Council has routinely been part of these efforts through both public hearings and legislation; *and,*

WHEREAS, On August 28, 2023, the Administration filed in City Council:
Message and order for your approval, an Ordinance to support public safety as the City doubles down on our public health-led approach to the crises of mental health, substance use, and unsheltered homelessness concentrated in the area of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. (Docket #2023-1373); the Committee on Government Operations held a public hearing on this matter on September 28, 2023, a subsequent public working session on October 16, 2023, and the ordinance was passed in a new draft on October 25, 2023; *and,*

WHEREAS, On September 13, 2023, two matters were filed in City Council:
Resolution Calling for a State of Emergency at the Intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. (Docket #2023-1447), and
Order for a hearing to discuss the humanitarian crisis at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. (Docket #2023-1450);

the Committee on Public Health, Homelessness & Recovery held a public hearing on both these matters together on September 26, 2023; *and*;

WHEREAS, On July 17, 2024, a matter was filed in City Council:
Order for a hearing to discuss ways to provide critical public safety support and address quality of life issues relating to the crisis at Mass and Cass. (Docket #2024-1205); the Committee on Public Safety & Criminal Justice held a public hearing on this matter on October 22, 2024; *and*;

WHEREAS, The City Council has not yet held a hearing primarily focused on similar matters in 2025, and it is worthwhile for the City Council to remain abreast of updates on the nature and impact of these crises and the City of Boston's continued and evolving efforts, as well as to discuss opportunities for the City Council to provide further support measures to address these issues;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss public safety and public health updates related to the crises of mental health, substance use, and homelessness and housing instability concentrated in the area of Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. Representatives from the appropriate departments of the Administration and community organizations will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

Filed in Council: April 9, 2025