



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations  
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

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## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

December 1, 2025

Dear Councilors,

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

***Docket #0138, Ordinance Codifying the Office of Returning Citizens.***

This matter was sponsored by Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune and was referred to the Committee on January 8, 2025.

***Summary of Legislation***

***Docket #0138*** is an ordinance proposing the codification of the currently operating Office of Returning Citizens. The ordinance lays out the purpose of the office, its duties, and the responsibilities of the Executive Director. The duties of the office include serving as an advocate for returning citizens, helping to address barriers to reintegration, coordinating reentry services, and connecting returning citizens with support, training, and resources.

***Information Received at Hearing***

The Committee held a hearing on Wednesday, November 26, 2025, to discuss Docket #0138. City of Boston Chief of Human Services José Massó and Office of Returning Citizens' Executive Director Ashley Montgomery, testified on behalf of the Administration.

The Administration testified in support of the proposed Ordinance, highlighting the growth of the office during the last four years from a staff of two to a staff of eleven, and an increase in annual budget from \$200,000 to \$2.5 million, which has enabled the office to take on more clients and expand its services. The office focuses on individualized case management, and is currently serving 680 active clients, with no wait list. The office offers specialist support for employment and housing, as well as training and programming on topics ranging from financial literacy to digital equity to entrepreneurship. In the past year the office was able to place 86 clients with permanent employers, and 49 clients in housing. The office has also been able to greatly expand its grant making opportunities with community partners, totalling nearly \$1 million in FY26 to expand employment, housing, and reentry support. Moving forward the office is focusing on addressing assessment-identified barriers, including transportation, digital equity, housing, and social supports, through provision of bus passes, collaboration with the City's digital equity team and Boston Public Library, extended support hours and grant opportunities, and increased and intentional community programming.

Councilors discussed additional possible areas of growth for the office, including in recovery services, legal aid, and policy advocacy.

***Summary of Amendments***

The legislation, as amended, reflects the following changes:



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1. Minor wording changes were made, including substituting the word “assist” for the word “ensure”, and the word “collaborate” for the word “partner” throughout, removal of examples, and other non-substantive word changes to remove duplicate phrases and provide the office with the requisite discretion required by Charter.
2. In **Section 1, Purpose**, the following sentence was added at the end thereof: *“The Office recognizes the value of returning citizens as both recipients of services, clients, and as leaders helping to shape the vision and work of the Office.”*
3. In **Section 2, Duties of the Office**, collection and maintenance of data was separated from the requirement to provide an annual report on the activities of the office. The phrase *“provide an annual report to the Mayor and the City Council detailing the Office’s activities, outcomes, and recommendations for policy or program changes”* was replaced by *“File with the City Clerk an annual report on the activities and outcomes of the Office”*.

## ***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