



Boston City Council
ED FLYNN
Councilor - District 2

William Joyce, Executive Director
Massachusetts Architectural Access Board
One Federal Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA, 02110

December 1, 2025

Re: Request for Investigation into Frequent Breakdowns of Elevators at BHA Ruth Barkley Apartments

Dear Executive Director Joyce,

On November 26, the evening before Thanksgiving, I received a call from disability advocate Dawn Oates. Ms. Oates has previously filed MAAB complaints regarding the elevators at the Ruth Barkley Apartments (Boston Housing Authority) in Boston's South End and testified at both special hearings I convened at the Boston City Council on this specific issue.

Ms. Oates informed me that residents reported the sole elevator at 19 Monsignor Reynolds Way had gone out of service on Tuesday, November 25. This failure occurred only weeks after her two year MAAB complaint had been closed.

A resident stated that they called the Boston Housing Authority work order center at 9:06 AM on Tuesday to report the outage. Instead of generating a work order, they were told that building maintenance would be contacted directly. Throughout the rest of the day and overnight, neither BHA maintenance personnel nor the contracted elevator vendor arrived at the building to address the outage.

At the invitation of Ms. Oates and Ruth Barkley residents, I arrived at the Washington Street side of the complex at approximately 8:00 AM on Thanksgiving morning to meet with residents. At that time, the elevator was still not operational. After speaking with residents, I stepped outside of the building. I was then informed that a white pickup truck had arrived around 8:30 AM on the driveway side of the complex and waited until 9:00 AM. The individual in the truck met BHA maintenance staff, was keyed into the building to reset the elevator, and departed approximately one minute later.

This simple reset, if it had been performed in a timely manner on Tuesday, would have prevented residents from being trapped in their homes for two days. Under BHA's own posted protocol, residents should have been notified on Tuesday that the elevator was expected to be out of service



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for two or more hours. Instead, BHA delayed calling the elevator vendor and did not communicate any urgency. This caused the outage to extend an additional day.

Even after the elevator was reportedly restored shortly after 9:00 AM on Thanksgiving Day, BHA did not notify residents until 12:01 PM. By that time, Thanksgiving Day plans and prior day travel plans had been canceled and several residents had already missed Thanksgiving with family and friends.

During the entire outage, beginning Tuesday, November 25 and lasting through Thursday, November 27 at 12:01 PM, the BHA did not comply with any portion of its posted elevator failure protocol. Specifically:

- No staff were posted in the lobby to assist with groceries, prescriptions, or packages.
- No stair assist services were arranged for residents unable to navigate stairs.
- No temporary hotel accommodations or meal per diem options were offered.
- No building-wide notifications of the outage or resolution were issued.
- Only an opt-in prerecorded message was sent, and it was delivered three hours after service had allegedly been restored.

A significant portion of the residents of 19 Monsignor Reynolds Way are elderly, disabled, or people of color. The continued lack of safe and reliable egress from their homes presents a serious public safety concern and raises equity issues. Residents deserve more than repeated assurances that the elevator floor and pit were upgraded. Their experience this Thanksgiving demonstrates that the elevator system, and the BHA response protocol, remain unreliable.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board reopen its investigation. The pattern of noncompliance, the failure to follow mandated procedures, and the lack of urgency continue to endanger residents and are inconsistent with the requirements of 521 CMR. This injustice can't be ignored by the City of Boston and the Boston Housing Authority.

Sincerely,

Ed Flynn
Boston City Councilor, District 2