



OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ERIN MURPHY, ED FLYNN, JOHN FITZGERALD, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN, LOUIJEUNE, MEJIA, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WEBER, AND WORRELL

CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

EMERGENCY ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE INCREASE AND SPREAD OF NEEDLE-RELATED PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY HAZARDS IN BOSTON

WHEREAS, A recent data analysis published on October 22, 2025, by researcher and writer James Piccirilli used City of Boston 311 reports to track needle pickups across the city, revealing that reports of discarded needles have risen by more than 75 percent since 2022 and 20 percent since last year, demonstrating a worsening public health and safety crisis for residents across Boston; and

WHEREAS, The study found that while the epicenter of the crisis remains in the Mass and Cass area, the surrounding neighborhoods of the South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester have experienced the sharpest increases in reported needle pickups, with some areas showing growth of 200 to 300 percent over the last two years, and 311 data confirms that needles are now being found in neighborhoods across the entire city, underscoring that this is not a localized issue but a citywide public health concern; and

WHEREAS, The City's 311 data also shows that overall service requests have increased by only 2 percent during that same period, suggesting that the rise in needle reports reflects a genuine increase in discarded needles rather than higher reporting alone; and

WHEREAS, This trend underscores both a worsening public health emergency and an urgent need for targeted environmental response, street cleaning, and recovery coordination to protect residents, children, and pets from hazardous exposure; and

WHEREAS, The Community Syringe Redemption Program (CSRP) was proven effective in reducing hazardous waste and supporting public safety, yet the lapse in funding has created significant gaps in syringe collection and disposal, contributing to a sharp rise in 311 reports of discarded needles throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, The specific issue of hazardous waste and the rapid spread of discarded syringes beyond the immediate Mass and Cass corridor constitute an escalating public health and safety emergency that demands immediate attention, sustained interdepartmental coordination, and transparent accountability from the Boston Public Health Commission, the Office of Recovery Services, and all relevant city departments to protect residents and restore safety across every neighborhood;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the Boston City Council hold an **emergency hearing** to review the increase and spread of needle-related public health and safety hazards across Boston, to examine current data and response strategies, and to discuss the reinstatement and sustainable funding of the Community Syringe Redemption Program. The hearing shall include participation from the Boston Public Health Commission, Public Works Department, Boston Police Department, Office of Recovery Services, Department of Innovation and Technology, Newmarket Business Association, and representatives of affected neighborhoods throughout the city.

Filed in Council: October 29, 2025