

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, LIZ BREADON, GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, BREADON, DURKAN, FLYNN, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WORRELL, AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING LGBTQ+ YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, Homelessness and housing instability are disturbingly common amongst LGBTQ+ youth, with 28% of LGBTQ+ youth reporting experiencing homelessness or housing instability at some point during their lives (Trevor Project, 2021); *and,*

WHEREAS, LGBTQ+ youth are 120% more likely to face homelessness than their peers (True Colors United), with intersecting challenges increasing the risk of experiencing homelessness, including discrimination, family rejection, lack of social support, and inadequate community services (Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ+ Youth [MCLGBTQY], 2024 FY25 Annual Recommendations Report); *and,*

WHEREAS, In Massachusetts, 30% of unaccompanied youth and young adults under the age of 25 who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+ (Massachusetts Special Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth [UHYC], 2022 Youth Count);

WHEREAS, Transgender and nonbinary youth are at particular risk for homelessness, with 38% of transgender girls/women, 39% of transgender boys/men, and 35% of nonbinary youth reporting homelessness and housing instability, by comparison to 23% of cisgender LGBTQ youth (Trevor Project, 2021);

WHEREAS, The risk for transgender youth experiencing homelessness is rapidly growing, with a 28% increase in just one year (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2023 Annual Count); *and,*

WHEREAS, Transgender and nonbinary youth report experiencing the highest rate of discrimination in shelters; further, shelters often fail to meet even basic needs for transgender individuals, for instance, men's shelters failing to provide access to menstrual products for transmasculine individuals (MCLGBTQY, 2024 FY25 Annual Recommendations Report); *and,*

WHEREAS, The risk of homelessness also disproportionately affects youth of color, with Black youth 83% more likely and Latinx/e youth 33% more likely to experience homelessness (True Colors United); this is exacerbated by racist housing discrimination, with LGBTQ+ people of color being 138% more likely to have experienced discrimination affecting their ability to rent or purchase a home to some degree, and 186% as likely to report experiencing discrimination in an apartment community (American Progress, June 2020 National Survey); *and,*

WHEREAS, Youth homelessness is especially prevalent in Massachusetts, with two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts being in families with children, which is the highest portion in the country (HUD, 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report); *and,*

WHEREAS, LGBTQ+ youth are the subgroup most likely to exchange sex or sexual content for food, a place to stay, money, or other needs, with 56.6% of Massachusetts youth engaging in these activities identifying as LGBTQ+ (UHYC, 2022 Youth Count); *and,*

WHEREAS, Despite LGBTQ+ youth being the most vulnerable to exchanging sex for needs, 55% of homeless youth service providers in Massachusetts reported receiving no training in LGBTQ+ sexual health (UHYC, 2022 Young Adults Who Experience Homelessness or Housing Instability and Exchange Sex to Meet Their Needs: Findings & Recommendations); *and,*

WHEREAS, LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability often go unidentified and lack connection to vital services due to being more likely to have even the people closest to them unaware of their housing situation, and being difficult for outreach services to connect with due to frequently moving between transient housing situations; *and,*

WHEREAS, Our Boston Public Schools (BPS) are an important avenue for connecting with and serving youth experiencing homelessness, with roughly 8% of BPS students — totaling over 4,000 students — experiencing homelessness in School Year 2021-2022 (BPS Homeless Education Resource Network, 2022), which is over twice the statewide rate of youth in Massachusetts public schools experiencing homelessness (National Center for Homeless Education); to help address this, BPS employs homeless liaisons at every school across the district, and BPS implemented a youth peer housing navigation and rapid rehousing program; *and,*

WHEREAS, Many local Boston organizations are working to address LGBTQ+ youth and young adult homelessness, including BAGLY (Boston Alliance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth), Breaktime, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Fenway Health, and the Transgender Emergency Fund of Massachusetts; *and,*

WHEREAS, Despite valiant efforts, there remain major gaps in the LGBTQ+ youth-specific emergency shelters, wraparound services, and support programs available to address LGBTQ+ youth and young adult homelessness in the city of Boston, and further work can and should be done to identify and address these needs.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing regarding LGBTQ+ youth and young adult homelessness in the city of Boston. Representatives from the Mayor's Offices of Housing, LGBTQ+ Advancement, and Youth Engagement and Advancement; Boston Public Schools Homeless Education Resource Network; and community organizations and advocates will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

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