



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations
Ricardo Arroyo, Chair

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

October 4, 2023

Dear Councilors:

Docket #1300, Ordinance Amending City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter XII, Section 12-20, Latino and Caribbean Affairs for Public Health and Welfare, was referred to the Committee on August 9, 2023, and sponsored by Councilors Julia Mejia, Brian Worrell, and Ricardo Arroyo. The Committee held a hearing on August 31, 2023 and a working session on October 2, 2023.

Summary of Legislation As Filed:

Docket #1300 would amend the City of Boston Code of Ordinances by creating a dedicated office equipped to attend to the growing needs of the Latino and Caribbean population of Boston. This office seeks to ensure that services and policies address the needs and concerns of the Latino and Caribbean communities through community engagement efforts, services, and policies, as well as a way to monitor the progress and provide oversight and accountability on the impact of the City's policies, programs, procedures and protocols.

This ordinance would call for a Director of Latino and Caribbean Affairs to be appointed by the Mayor. The Director's main responsibilities would include advising and assisting in developing policies designed to assist Latino and Caribbean residents while enhancing the accessibility of City programs, services and benefits, in addition to conducting research and soliciting community and stakeholder input.

Information Gathered at the August 31, 2023 Hearing:

The Committee heard testimony from a panel of community members and Chief Mariangely Solis Cervera, from the Mayor's Office of Equity and Inclusion. The community panel consisted of the following individuals: Dr. Lorna Rivera, Professor & Director, Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development, UMass Boston; Dr. Neenah Estrella-Luna, Owner StarLuna Consulting; Andrew Sharpe, Chairman; Authentic Caribbean Foundation; and Danielle Johnson, Founder and CEO, Spark FM Online. Councilors provided opening remarks supporting the members of this community and the proposal. The Committee discussed the population of Latino and Caribbean residents in the City and recognized that this community should be reflective in the City's programs and policies.

The community panel stated that the experience of the Latino and Caribbean community should be centered on equity. The community panel supported having a separate office so as not to

overburden the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement ("MOIA"). The community panel explained that this office would collaborate with MOIA and would provide support to this community and recommend cultural competent programs. Dr. Rivera reviewed slides that showed barriers faced by this community in home ownership and education. Dr. Rivera discussed the shared history of this community and explained that a dedicated office could function by assisting with language access, policy and programming recommendations, and distributing information about programs, grants, and contract opportunities.

The Committee discussed what this office would look like and discussed the best way to structure the office. The Committee discussed that the Office could focus on curriculum, cultural competence, inclusive policies, and prosperity for the community.

Public comments reflected support of the docket. comments from the public expressed that it is important to have someone that is able to relate to this community from the City. Public comments supported the proposal because having such an office will benefit City leaders and will ensure that this community knows about and has access to City resources.

Chief Solis Cervera explained that the cultural liaisons will be moving from the Office of Neighborhood Services to the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet. Chief Solis Cervera explained that the liaisons will be moving to an advisory role to the director of cultural affairs. Chief Solis Cervera explained that the cultural liaisons will focus on fostering a sense of belonging, proactively delivering results to the community, and advising on policy.

Information Gathered at the October 2 Working Session:

Councilors provided opening remarks and acknowledged the collaboration with the Administration. The Councilors reviewed the language of the docket by section and discussed amended language. The following individuals participated on behalf of the Administration: Mariangely Solis-Cervera, Chief, Equity and Inclusion; and Alexandra Valdez, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement.

Based on information gathered at the hearing and conversations with the Administration, the docket is amended from its initial filing to expand the scope of the ordinance. The docket is amended by changing the title from Latino and Caribbean Affairs to the Office of Cultural Affairs. The purpose clause is amended to expand the scope of the ordinance to other cultural communities. Councilors and the Administration discussed whether the term should be office or division. New language is added to define the purpose of this office to focus on policies and programs that are responsive to the needs of cultural communities under this ordinance to ensure equity and inclusion of these communities in the City's resources. The proposal is amended to establish the Office of Cultural Affairs which will be under the charge of the Director of Cultural Affairs. This Office will be part of the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet. Placing this Office under the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet will ensure that the Office does not stand alone and that it will have its own line item in the budget.

Language is amended regarding the responsibilities of the Director including management responsibilities. Specific language is added to refer to Cultural Advisors and their responsibilities. Language is added to define historically excluded cultural communities in order to identify the groups that are covered by this ordinance. Currently there are four cultural advisors as follows: LatinX, Cape Verdean, Vietnamese, and Haitian. This ordinance in its amended draft gives the City flexibility to address cultural communities based upon need.

In the reporting requirements, the section as originally filed is stricken and replaced with language that requires midyear reporting to the City Council containing information about priorities and policy recommendations based upon the input from the Cultural Advisors. The effective date is amended so that the Administration has enough time to roll out the obligations.

Summary and Language of Amendments:

Based upon information gathered at the hearing and discussion at the working session the docket is amended to expand the scope of the ordinance, to further define the purpose clause and to identify the responsibilities of the director and the role of the cultural advisors.

The docket is amended as follows:

12-20.1 Purpose.

The City of Boston is inhabited by a broad and diverse set of constituents from cultural communities, some of which have been and may continue to be underrepresented in City government decision making. Therefore, a concerted effort to develop policies and programs that are responsive to the strengths and needs of these cultural communities is necessary to ensure equity and inclusion for these communities in our City.

12-20.2 Establishment of the Office of Cultural Affairs.

There shall be established in the City of Boston the Office of Cultural Affairs, hereafter referred to as the Office, which shall be under the charge of an Officer known as the Director of Cultural Affairs (hereafter called the Director), who shall be appointed by the Mayor. The Office will be a part of the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet.

12-20.3 Director Responsibilities.

The Director, or designee, of the Office shall have the power and the duty to:

1. Develop, implement and evaluate culturally competent programming aimed at fostering a sense of belonging in the City among diverse cultural communities;
2. Connect with City departments, community leaders and cultural organizations to curate events or find resources and opportunities for constituents. Enhance the accessibility of City programs, benefits, and services to the historically excluded cultural communities represented by this office by establishing outreach programs in conjunction with other City agencies and departments to inform and educate those communities of relevant City programs, benefits, and services;
3. Collaborate with stakeholders to develop and advocate for policies that address the unique needs and challenges of various cultural communities and perform policy analysis and program evaluation to ensure the social, emotional and financial well-being of these cultural communities;
4. Solicit community and stakeholder input regarding programming and policies to ensure that the priorities of underrepresented communities are properly considered in City decision making;
5. Manage a staff of Cultural Advisors responsible for leading the above functions for specific historically excluded cultural communities in the City of Boston:

- a. Historically excluded cultural communities will be defined as groups of Boston residents:
 - i. With common ethnic ancestry, country of origin, language spoken, and/or region of the world;
 - ii. With significant populations in the City of Boston; and
 - iii. That, as a whole or with a subgroup, have economic, health, or civic indicators demonstrating an insufficient ability to benefit from Boston's resources.
6. Cultural advisors will develop a midyear progress report and end of year review on current lessons learned, community priorities, and policy recommendations to better serve the residents within each cultural community;
7. Advise the Mayor on challenges faced by historically underrepresented residents, including, but not limited to, obstacles to accessing City programs, benefits, and services, and on socioeconomic trends related to such persons; and
8. Identify model policies, practices, and programs within City departments or agencies, as well as in other municipalities across the United States, that effectively support historically excluded residents that can be adopted or adapted across the City; and
9. Perform such other duties and functions as may be appropriate to pursue the policies set forth in this section.

12-20.4 Reporting Requirements.

The Office shall provide to the City Council a midyear progress report and end of year review on current lessons learned, community priorities, and policy recommendations to better serve the residents within each cultural community developed by the Cultural advisors.

The effective date will be July 1, 2024.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

The amended language expands the scope of the ordinance to give the City the flexibility to address the needs of historically underrepresented residents. The amended docket recognizes the current cultural advisors and allows flexibility to include other cultural communities. Clarifying the role of the director and establishing cultural advisors shows the intent of the City to develop policies and programs through collaboration with internal and external departments and organizations to address the needs of the cultural communities covered by this ordinance. Having cultural advisors and a director focusing on specific cultural communities will ensure that these communities have access to City resources and are aware of various programs and economic opportunities that are available. Passage of this docket in its amended draft will ensure that historically excluded cultural communities will have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of City government and the resources of the City of Boston.

By the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

Docket #1300, Ordinance Amending City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Chapter XII, Section 12-20, Latino and Caribbean Affairs for Public Health and Welfare,

submits a report recommending that this docket ought to pass in a new draft.

For the Chair:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ra', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ricardo Arroyo, Chair
Committee on Government Operations