

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, JOHN FITZGERALD, GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, BREADON, DURKAN, FERNANDES ANDERSON, FLYNN, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPÉN, WEBER, WORRELL, AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS BOSTON'S LGBTQIA+ MENTAL HEALTH DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES, EXISTING SERVICES, AND FURTHER COMMUNITY NEEDS

WHEREAS, Numerous studies have consistently found that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has one of the highest LGBTQ+ population concentrations of any U.S. state or district, with the city of Boston being home to the largest population identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer in Massachusetts; *and,*

WHEREAS, Studies also show that LGBTQ+ people in both Massachusetts and the U.S. at large suffer from higher rates of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation and attempts, and other harmful mental health effects relative to their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts, due to continual and growing exposure to social and political hostility, discrimination, bullying, and a severe lack of access to mental health resources addressing their needs; these effects are especially pronounced amongst youth; transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive people; and LGBTQ+ people with intersectional identities, including Indigenous people, Black people, people of color, neurodiverse people, and immigrants; *and,*

WHEREAS, The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth (MCLGBTQY) FY25 Report released on May 28, 2024, observes:

“515 anti-LGBTQ bills have been introduced by policymakers in states across the nation; many have already passed in the South and Midwest. In our country, states are legislating discrimination, dehumanization, terrorization, and the erasure of millions of queer, transgender, and gender-expansive youth, as well as their caregivers, providers, and educators.

“As a result, 50% of our queer and trans youth have seriously considered suicide in the past year. More than 70% of our LGBTQ youth experience anxiety, and 58% report depression. Despite these statistics, 1 in 2 LGBTQ youth in Massachusetts were unable to access the mental health care they desperately wanted.”; *and,*

WHEREAS, The most recent Trevor Project survey found that 11% of 13-18 year-old LGBTQ+ youth in Massachusetts had attempted suicide; with an even higher rate of 16.2% of Boston Public High School students identifying as lesbian, gay,

bisexual, questioning, and students who describe their sexuality in some other non-heterosexual way (LGBQ+) having attempted suicide per a 2024 Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) report analyzing data from 2017, 2019, and 2021 studies; *and*,

WHEREAS, The U.S. Census Bureau’s most recent Household Pulse Survey notes that LGBTQ+ 18-29 year-olds are nearly twice as likely to experience anxiety and depression as their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts, with similar findings noted in local Boston data in the BPHC’s Health of Boston 2024 Mental Health Report; *and*,

WHEREAS, Despite crisis-level public health concerns for LGBTQ+ mental health, Boston’s LGBTQ+ population is often invisible to data collection, with the MCLGBTQY noting that “no recent national and state-level survey about LGBTQ mental health exists that is disaggregated by intersex status, immigration status, geographical location, disability, or involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice”; *and*,

WHEREAS, In a June 2024 report addressing LGBTQ+ health equity in Boston, the BPHC identifies significant health concerns and inequities, but notes:

“To date, however, there has not been a consolidated effort in the city of Boston to address LGBTQ+ specific health issues and disparities. BPHC’s current programming is inclusive of serving LGBTQ+ residents; however not specifically directed toward reducing health disparities in the LGBTQ+ community.”; *and*,

WHEREAS, Given the increasing legislative attacks on members of the LGBTQ+ community across the country by all levels of government, special consideration must be given to the privacy and safety of LGBTQ+ community members when collecting and analyzing sensitive mental health and healthcare data for public health purposes; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the City of Boston’s current LGBTQIA+ mental health data collection processes, existing services, and further community needs, so that the City can be better informed and equipped to tackle the public mental health crisis among both LGBTQIA+ youth and adults. Representatives from the Boston Public Health Commission, Mayor’s Office of LGBTQ+ Advancement, Mayor’s Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement, Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, and relevant local community organizations will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

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