

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDRESSING DRINK SPIKING AND DRUG-FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT

WHEREAS, Reports of suspected drink spiking and drug-facilitated sexual assault (DFSA) continue to surface in Boston nightlife settings, emergency departments, and advocacy networks, demonstrating that contaminated beverages remain an ongoing public-safety concern; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has made some progress towards ensuring effective services and data collection in instances of drink spiking crimes. For instance, the Boston Police Department updated its internal reporting system to track suspected drink spiking incidents, expanded officer training, and committed to assigning detectives even when sexual assault is not immediately alleged; *and*

WHEREAS, The Office of Nightlife Economy and the Licensing Board have also committed to venue-based safety measures, including technical assistance for nightlife businesses, distribution of drink covers, and policies encouraging establishments to report suspected incidents without fear of penalty; *and*

WHEREAS, However, Boston still lacks a unified citywide framework for drug-facilitated assault prevention, staff training, survivor response, data collection, and interagency coordination, limiting the City's ability to measure trends, identify repeat locations, and intervene early. The continued absence of standardized testing protocols and transparent data sharing leaves many cases effectively "unenforceable" in practice; *and*

WHEREAS, Additionally, survivors still face significant barriers because substances commonly used in DFSA, including GHB, Rohypnol, and ketamine, metabolize rapidly, meaning evidence is often lost before survivors are able to access care or law enforcement; *and*

WHEREAS, To address this gap, Senator Paul Feeney filed S.1537, *An Act safeguarding victims of illicit drink spiking*, which would establish standardized toxicology testing protocols and care pathways for individuals who report involuntary drug ingestion. The bill would require hospitals to provide timely and reliable testing

for suspected drink spiking, whether or not a sexual assault is reported, and would strengthen evidence collection and survivor-centered response practices; *and*

WHEREAS, S.1537 would also create an Illicit Drink Spiking Response and Intervention Task Force within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to study, report, and recommend best practices for preventing and responding to drug-facilitated sexual assault; *and*

WHEREAS, The City has also continued public education and prevention efforts through resolutions, awareness campaigns, and cross-agency partnerships that recognize drink spiking as both a public-health and public-safety issue. These combined efforts demonstrate meaningful progress at the municipal and state level, while also highlighting the need for continued coordination, data sharing, and state-local alignment to fully address drink spiking and drug-facilitated sexual assault; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to review progress made by the City; examine updated data on suspected drink spiking incidents; assess remaining service gaps in testing, reporting, survivor care, and prevention; and identify opportunities to align municipal strategies with pending State legislation and best practices. Representatives from the Boston Police Department, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Licensing Board, Mayor's Office of Nightlife Economy, survivor advocacy organizations, hospital systems, and relevant agencies will be invited to testify.

Filed on: January 28, 2026