

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON, BREADON, COLETTA, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WEBER, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS AN INCREASE IN RACIST INCIDENTS IN BOSTON AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION'S ROLE IN TRACKING, REPORTING, AND ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

WHEREAS; Bostonians are increasingly concerned with the rise in racist activities and hate crimes as major cities across the United States, including the 10 largest U.S. cities, have witnessed significant surges in hate crimes in 2023, reaching levels not seen since the Federal Bureau of Investigation began collecting hate crime statistics in 1991, and Boston has reported an estimated 177 hate crimes through December 22, 2023, representing the highest number since 2001; *and*

WHEREAS; A vocal and increasingly violent minority continue to overtly and strategically push white supremacy, evidenced by multiple incidents including the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017; the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021; a protest by white supremacists in front of Brigham & Women's Hospital and at the St. Patrick's Day Parade; the recent white supremacist march on July 2, 2022 through the city that resulted in white supremacists assaulting a Black resident; or the recent increase in antisemitic crimes correlating with global events and a rise in hate crimes against Muslims, Arabs, Palestinians, and Asian American Pacific Islanders; *and*

WHEREAS; Our Mayor and former colleague, Michelle Wu, has seen open threats of violence and hate speech lobbied against her as the first elected woman Mayor and as our first elected Mayor of color; *and*

WHEREAS; There is a significant underreporting of hate crimes in the United States, suggesting that the actual number of offenses in Boston may be higher than reported;

WHEREAS; The Boston Police Department, one of the first to track hate crimes through a specialized unit established in 1978, has been a model for reporting and investigating such crimes, however many residents have expressed hesitancy in reporting non-violent assaults, slurs, or threats to the Boston Police Department, indicating a need for the Human Rights Commission to fill the reporting gap;

WHEREAS; Boston's commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to hate crimes and racism necessitates perseverance in collecting and reporting on human rights, civil rights, discrimination, and hate crime incidents, especially those involving threats of violence; *and*

WHEREAS; It is the mission of the Human Rights Commission to engage in relationships and partnerships that embody principles of dignity, respect, human rights compliance, accountability, and act as a driver for social change based on substantive equality, equity, and inclusion for all; *and*

WHEREAS; The Human Rights Commission is involved in public, community, and private partnerships, providing outreach, education, technical assistance, and addressing systematic discrimination; *and*

WHEREAS; Updating the Human Rights Commission ordinance to include stronger reporting requirements, strengthening enforcement powers, and adding civil rights mandates may create a more impactful and modernized Human Rights Commission; *and*

WHEREAS; Boston must ensure an effective, community-centered response to the growing incidents of hate, racism, and discrimination; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED; That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing discussing the increase in white supremacist incidents in Boston and the Human Rights Commission's role in tracking, reporting, and addressing the incidents of hate and discrimination; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

ORDERED; That representatives from the Human Rights Commission, Boston Police Civil Rights Unit, Massachusetts Office of Civil Rights, Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Boston Employment Commission, Office of Fair Housing and Equity, Office of LGBTQ+ Advancement, Office of Immigrant Advancement, Black Men and Boys Commission and other relevant government entities, non-profits, and interested parties be invited to attend and testify.