

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR BRIAN WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS THE CREATION OF INDOOR PLAYGROUNDS IN BOSTON

WHEREAS: Physical activity benefits not only physical health but also mental health and social development for children and families; *and*

WHEREAS, Research shows that regular physical activity is also associated with improved academic outcomes for children, including stronger performance in math and attention-based learning; *and*

WHEREAS, Access to safe and affordable recreational space is a recognized determinant of health and equity, particularly for low-income families and communities of color; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston experiences prolonged periods of extreme cold, snow, and ice during the late fall and winter months, which significantly limit children's ability to safely use outdoor playgrounds for several months every year; *and*

WHEREAS, According to the City of Boston Planning Department Research Division's report, Parks Project Pt. 2: An Analysis of Park Usage & Users in Four Boston Parks (2025), park visitation is highest during warmer months and drops substantially during colder periods, demonstrating the seasonal limits of outdoor recreation in Boston; *and*

WHEREAS, The same report finds that some of Boston's most heavily used parks, including Roberts Playground in Dorchester, primarily serve children from Black and Brown families and low-income households, with Roberts Playground users most likely to be aged 0–17, Black or African American, and earning between \$10,000–\$30,000 annually; *and*

WHEREAS, The report further shows that families who rely most on free public parks are also the most affected by seasonal barriers, as they have fewer affordable alternatives for indoor recreation during winter months; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston currently has a limited number of indoor recreational play facilities, and commercially operated indoor play spaces often charge hourly access fees that are cost-prohibitive for working families; *and*

WHEREAS, Indoor play facilities also function as community spaces that support family connection, early childhood development, and neighborhood cohesion, particularly in dense and underserved areas; *and*

WHEREAS, There is a clear need to explore municipal indoor playgrounds as a year-round recreational solution that promotes equity, supports working families, and ensures children can remain physically active regardless of weather conditions; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the creation of municipal indoor playgrounds in the City of Boston, and that representatives from Boston Centers for Youth & Families, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Planning Department Research Division, and other relevant City agencies and community stakeholders be invited to testify on feasibility, cost, location prioritization, and equitable access.

Filed on: January 23, 2026