

**OFFERED BY COUNCILOR TANIA FERNANDES-ANDERSON AND ERIN MURPHY,
Louijeune, Arroyo, Baker, Bok, Breadon, Flaherty, Flynn, Lara, Mejia and Worrell**



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS WAYS IN WHICH ARPA FUNDING CAN SUPPORT AN ECOSYSTEM OF NON-PROFIT HOLISTIC WRAPAROUND HEALTH SERVICES FOR DISENFRANCHISED POPULATIONS

WHEREAS, Covid-19 has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown people in Boston. According to the boston.gov website, Black people have suffered 33% or 1/3 of all Covid related deaths in the city, despite being just 24% of the population. Conversely, white people suffered 41% of all covid related deaths, despite making up a significantly larger share of the population at 52%. This can be in large part explained by the variety of pre-existing health conditions that Black Bostonians suffer from, which are, in themselves, in large degree closely related to legacies and current manifestations of environmental racism, poverty, food deserts, and more; *and*

WHEREAS, According to a GBH article from last December, “Over 39% of Hispanic residents with moderate incomes reported difficulties accessing care at a doctor’s office or clinic, compared with 29% of white residents in the same income bracket.” Additionally, “Nearly one in three Hispanic residents reported having an unmet health care need because of how much it cost, and over a quarter of Black residents said the same. The number for White residents was lower: 22.8%.”; *and*

WHEREAS, The Boston Resilience Fund provided essential services and funds to Boston residents whose health and well-being are most immediately impacted by COVID-19. According to the boston.gov website, just 1.1 million dollars of the 34.6 million dollars distributed by the Boston Resiliency Fund have gone to people left out of federal coronavirus relief programs, meaning that these people, predominantly immigrants of color, would have been among those in the greatest need of said resources; *and*

WHEREAS, That 11% of all Bostonians, or around 100,000 people, have limited English speaking proficiency. This hinders their ability in a number of ways, including a lack of available interpretation and translation services, and no access to job opportunities that require proficient English skills, which then locks them into grinding, low wage jobs that do not allow them the free time to acquire the skills they need to advance, creating a proverbial catch-22; *and*

WHEREAS, The homeless population is on the rise, with the number of homeless families up 8.7% from 1,190 families to 1,294 families during 2019 to 2020 alone. The number of homeless family members rose 6.8% during the same period, from 3,766 in 2019 to 4,021 in 2020. Additionally, there are nearly 2,500 homeless individuals in the city, accounting for a total of around 6,500 homeless people in the city. Not surprisingly, these numbers rose toward the beginning of the pandemic, and the state of homelessness they are now experiencing has led to a slew of interconnected socio-economic difficulties in regards to healthcare, education, nutrition, and more, increasing the problems that the pandemic could cause for them; *and*

WHEREAS, According to the statistics atlas website, over $\frac{1}{3}$ of all Hispanics in the city do not have a high school diploma, and nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ of all Black people in the city do not have a high school diploma, compared to less than 5%, or $\frac{1}{20}$ of all white people who do not have it. Such educational outcomes act to severely limit where people can afford to live, the jobs they can attain, whether they have health insurance, whether they can afford child care, and a variety of other related barometers that can induce mental, physical, and emotional health challenges both in regards to the pandemic and in general; *and*

WHEREAS, According to an article in Boston Magazine, pertaining to mental health challenges induced by the pandemic, factors include “fear of infection; the stress of disruption in our daily lives; the global economic crisis; and tremendous loss and grief around us, made worse when social distancing prevents traditional dying and mourning rituals.” All of these impacts, combined with the pre-existing conditions and comorbidities discussed above, present an array of mental health challenges; *and*

WHEREAS, Collaboration amongst nonprofits in order to coordinate services maximizes the reach of individual community networks and financial support systems. Nonprofits leverage relationships they have built with communities to target place-based challenges not yet regarded and recognized by the city and helps to consolidate scattered resources across numerous public sectors which often act to bar individuals from accessing critical information; *and*

WHEREAS, According to Bay State Recovery “The city of Boston reports that an estimated 11.3% of people living in Boston are suffering from some form of substance abuse.” This significant number, which represents more than 1 in every 10 residents, can act to hinder decision making skills and healthy life choices, access to housing and jobs, and increase the likelihood of disease, all contributing to the impacts of covid and other health issues; *and*

WHEREAS, The cost of child care is often prohibitive and economically out of reach for a great majority of our Black and Brown residents. The state of Massachusetts is the MOST expensive state for childcare in the country, with the average costs of

daycare at \$21,000 a year for infants and \$15,000 a year for four year olds. Compare these significant numbers with the fact that the median household income in Roxbury is \$41,661; *and*

WHEREAS, A consistent regimen of physical fitness has been shown to be of great benefit to people with a variety of health issues, at times even eclipsing the benefits of pharmaceuticals. However, it is difficult to engage in such physicality when one is overworked and under resourced, busy with childcare, unable to find adequate work because of limited language and educational attainment, and generally suffering from the interconnected structures of race and class inequality; *and*

WHEREAS, Healthy eating habits and access to nutritional food options have been shown to greatly reduce a variety of health concerns; thereby we should be intentional in supporting community gardens, encouraging supermarkets and bodegas to carry healthy food, and partake in educational endeavors to explain to our residents what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet. However, we also need to acknowledge the difficulties inherent in asking poor, working, and oppressed people who are overburdened with long work hours, paying exorbitant rents for often substandard housing, and just generally lacking the time and money to often, or even occasionally, make the kinds of decisions in regards to food that would be in their best interest, hence requiring us to offer stronger supports and services in order for them to do so; *and*

WHEREAS, A robust and activated arts and cultural realm can be of great assistance in supporting the physical, mental, and emotional needs of our residents. The power of music, art, dance, theater, and other artistic forms have been shown to open pathways of perception and possibility for the people who are able to access them. Supporting these endeavors, not merely through the repetition of progressive jargon, but rather, through substantial outlays of resources in reality, will be a great benefit to our residents health and well being; *and*

WHEREAS, Not having one consolidated HUB for all health needs is a barrier for all of the issues discussed above being properly adjudicated in order to implement strengths-based planning processes in a team setting to engage with children, youth, and their families while shifting the focus away from a traditional service-driven, problem-based approach to care and instead follow a strengths-based, needs-driven approach; *and*

WHEREAS, According to boston.gov, “the city’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has allocations of nearly 560 million dollars of which 350 million dollars have yet to be spent on once-in-a-generation opportunities for transformative investments that will help to jumpstart solutions to long-term challenges, while recognizing that we have to tackle the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the same time” focusing on programs that address social determinants of health such as education, housing, health, and economic opportunity; *and*

WHEREAS, Wraparound approaches are trauma informed, evidence based methods proven to help individuals and families acquire resources to address their public health need to curve social determinants of health and stabilize vulnerable families in disenfranchised communities ; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore ARPA funding to support the consolidation of health resources offered by nonprofits into a simplified accessible "ecosystem." To discuss ways a collision would synergistically address holistic health needs through sustainable, wraparound services working to connect populations most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic to evidence based resources . Furthermore, this hearing would investigate how existing programs, such as ARPA or the Resiliency Fund, can cure social determinants of health, particularly for Black communities who have been disproportionately impacted by the detrimental effects of the pandemic.

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