

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR BRIAN WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

**ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXPLORE
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR BOSTON STUDENTS TO
INCREASE ACCESS TO ALL FORMS OF HIGHER
EDUCATION**

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has been a national leader in public education for nearly four centuries, and access to higher education remains one of the most important drivers of economic mobility and long-term stability; and

WHEREAS, Boston Public Schools serve a highly diverse student population, with approximately 44% Hispanic/Latino students, 28% Black students, 9% Asian students, and 15% White students, many of whom face longstanding structural barriers to accessing higher education; *and*

WHEREAS, Changes to Boston's exam school admissions policies have had a measurable impact on access for students of color, with invitations to Black students increasing from approximately 13% under the prior system to 22–24% following earlier reforms, before declining again to approximately 15% after more recent policy changes, despite Black students comprising roughly 29% of the Boston Public Schools population; *and*

WHEREAS, These shifts highlight the continued need for broader, more reliable pathways to postsecondary opportunity for Boston students beyond selective admissions systems; *and*

WHEREAS, The cost of higher education continues to rise, and more than half of low-income college students leave school without a degree due to financial constraints; *and*

WHEREAS, Statewide data indicates that households of color in Massachusetts earn significantly less on average than White households, contributing to reduced family capacity to finance post-secondary education compared to more affluent households; *and*

WHEREAS, The City of Boston currently provides tuition assistance to a limited number of students, up to \$2,500 per year, an amount that represents less than 7% of the cost of attending UMass Boston or UMass Amherst and less than 5% of the cost of attending private institutions such as Boston University or Northeastern University; *and*

WHEREAS, Students can expect to spend an additional \$700 to \$1,000 per year on textbooks alone, not including housing, food, transportation, and other basic needs; *and*

WHEREAS, According to the Greater Boston Food Bank, 37% of public college students in Boston experience food insecurity, with rates rising to 52% for Black students, 47% for Latino students, 46% for LGBTQ+ students, and 53% for student-parents; *and*

WHEREAS, During the 2019–20 academic year, 56% of Massachusetts college graduates carried student loan debt averaging \$33,457, one of the highest averages in the nation; *and*

WHEREAS, Scholarship programs such as the Menino Scholarship at Boston University and the Boston Public High School Scholarship at Northeastern University provide full-tuition support to a limited number of Boston Public School graduates each year, demonstrating both the impact of such programs and the unmet demand that remains; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston's major higher education institutions, including Boston University and Northeastern University, benefit significantly from their tax-exempt status through the City's Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program; *and*

WHEREAS, In 2025 the City of Boston and Northeastern University announced an expanded partnership through a new PILOT agreement and institutional commitments focused on workforce development, community engagement, and neighborhood investment; however, these initiatives do not include a dedicated or guaranteed expansion of scholarship funding for Boston students, highlighting the need for additional, intentional efforts to address the rising cost of higher education and improve access for Boston families; *and*

WHEREAS, Expanding scholarship and tuition assistance programs would help address rising costs, reduce student debt, and create more equitable pathways to higher education for Boston students; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council convene a hearing to explore expanding scholarship and tuition assistance opportunities for Boston students, including ways the City, higher education institutions, community partners, and employers can collaborate to reduce financial barriers to postsecondary education. That representatives from Boston Public Schools, the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, the Center for Working Families, local colleges and universities, and other relevant stakeholders be invited to attend and testify.

Filed on: January 23, 2026