



Boston City Council

LIZ BREADON

Councilor – District 9

January 13, 2025

The Honorable Alex Geourntas
Office of the City Clerk
City of Boston
One City Hall Square, Room 601
Boston, MA 02201

Re: *Passage of Chapter 360 of the Acts of 2024, An Act increasing the maximum amount of penalties which may be imposed for violations of ordinances in the City of Boston*

Dear Clerk Geourntas:

I am pleased to notify the City Council of the enactment of Chapter 360 of the Acts of 2024, *An Act increasing the maximum amount of penalties which may be imposed for violations of ordinances in the City of Boston*. For your reference, a copy of the enacted legislation is enclosed.

This Act amends the City Charter provision under Chapter 448 of the Acts of 1854, which establishes the City's authority to impose fines for non-criminal violations of local ordinances. The maximum penalty for civil violations has been increased from \$300 to \$2,000, with a provision to adjust for inflation every five years starting January 1, 2025. Any adjustments to specific fine amounts set by the *City of Boston Code, Ordinances*, will require further approval by the City Council and Mayor.

This Charter Amendment reflects the culmination of nearly two years of collaborative effort, initiated as a proposed Order for a Petition for a Special Law (home rule petition) filed as *Docket #0410* on February 10, 2023. The City Council approved the Order on December 6, 2023, and it was signed by the Mayor on December 20, 2023. The Petition was subsequently filed as *House Bill 4507* in the 193rd General Court in March 2024. It passed the House of Representatives on July 22, 2024, the Senate on December 26, 2024, and was enacted by both chambers on December 30, 2024. The Governor signed the legislation into law on January 8, 2025.

Historically, the statutory maximum fine was set at \$50 in 1854 (equivalent to about \$1,850 in present value) and was raised only twice: to \$200 in 1976 (about \$1,050 today) and to \$300 in 1989 (about \$750 today). The City unsuccessfully petitioned in 2005 and 2007 to raise this maximum to \$1,000 (about \$1,500 today). Decades without adjustments for inflation disincentivized compliance with local ordinances, enabling some violators to treat the fines as merely the cost of doing business in our City.

This achievement strengthens the City's ability to enforce ordinances effectively and proactively, providing a stronger tool to meaningfully improve the quality of life for residents. I extend my gratitude to members of the Boston legislative delegation and leadership in the Senate and House for their support and concerted efforts to ensure the passage of this Charter Amendment. I also look forward to working with the City Council and Mayor to implement this new authority as we enhance enforcement and compliance efforts while assessing the City's existing sources of revenue.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Breadon

District 9

Allston-Brighton

cc: Corporation Counsel, Law Department, City of Boston
Chief of Policy and Strategic Planning, Mayor's Office, City of Boston
Director, Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Mayor's Office, City of Boston

Chapter ³⁶⁰
of the Acts of 2024

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court

AN ACT INCREASING THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF PENALTIES WHICH MAY BE IMPOSED
FOR VIOLATIONS OF ORDINANCES IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court
assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 35 of chapter 448 of the acts of 1854, as most
recently amended by section 102 of chapter 341 of the acts of 1989, is hereby
further amended by striking out in the second sentence the words "three
hundred dollars" and inserting in place thereof the following figure:-
\$2,000.

SECTION 2. Said section 35 of said chapter 448, as so amended, is hereby
further amended by adding the following paragraph:-

The maximum penalty set forth in this section shall be adjusted for
inflation, rounded to the nearest \$100, on January 1, 2025, and on January 1
every 5 years thereafter, based on the annual percentage change in the United
States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index
for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the Boston-Cambridge-Newton, Mass.-N.H.
Core Based Statistical Area, all items or its successor index.

SECTION 3. The provisions of this act are severable and if any
provision, or portion thereof, shall be held unconstitutional or otherwise
invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such unconstitutionality or
invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which remain in full
force and effect.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

House of Representatives, December 30, 2024.

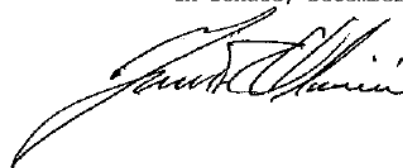
Passed to be enacted,



Acting
Speaker.

In Senate, December 30, 2024.

Passed to be enacted,



Acting
President.

January 8, 2024 2025

Approved,

at 1 o'clock and 08 minutes, P. M.

M. T. Hedy

Governor.