

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN, BRIAN WORRELL, RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, MEJIA, SANTANA, WEBER AND MURPHY



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS OPIOID RELATED OVERDOSE DEATHS IN THE OLDER BLACK POPULATION IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS:** Over the last two decades, the opioid epidemic has ravaged our country. Drug overdose deaths, in particular from synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, have seen a sharp increase. According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), between 2019 to 2022, there were close to 108,000 drug overdose deaths across the country, of which 74,000 were opioid-related deaths; *and*
- WHEREAS:** A recent joint-investigation into millions of death records by the Boston Globe, The New York Times, The Baltimore Banner, The San Francisco Standard, The Chicago Sun-Times, and other newspapers found that a group that has been consistently hardest hit by opioid overdose deaths in cities are Black men between the ages of 54 and 73; *and*
- WHEREAS:** From 2017-2023, data from the Massachusetts State Department of Public Health showed that the overdose death rate among black men over 55 years old increased by an alarming 242%. Black men aged 54 to 73 died four times more than the population amount they made up, and fentanyl was found in 93% of 2022 overdose deaths; *and*
- WHEREAS:** In 2022, the Boston Public Health Commission's *Health of Boston 2024: The Substance Use and Disorders Report* found that Black residents experienced the highest rate of fatal overdoses from any drug when compared to other racial and ethnic groups, and that overdose deaths were often caused by fentanyl laced into cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin or other drugs; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The City of Boston must have an urgent conversation about these sobering statistics impacting our older black men. The Boston Globe reported that many Black men in addiction treatment often feel unwelcome in programs that are not designed for them and their drug of choice, and that they are less willing to open up in spaces where it is difficult for others to understand their life experiences and past trauma; *and*
- WHEREAS:** It is critical that the City explores combative and preventative measures to tackle this public health crisis that continues to disproportionately harm older black men, including focusing on equity-based programs, harm reduction strategies, mandatory treatment, etc; *and*

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:**

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss opioid related deaths in the older black population and to explore ways to combat this trend. Representatives from the Boston Public Health Commission, Coordinated Response Team, and other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.

**Filed in Council: April 9, 2025**