



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

One City Hall Square 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ city.council@boston.gov

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

November 19, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0969, Ordinance establishing a Transgender, Gender-diverse, Intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ Oversight Commission.

This matter was sponsored by Councilors Julia Mejia, Liz Breadon and Henry Santana and was referred to the Committee on April 30, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #0969 is an Ordinance proposed to establish a Transgender, Gender-diverse, Intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ Oversight Commission. As filed, in Sections 1-5, the Ordinance states the proposed Commission's purpose, defines relevant terms, outlines the composition of the proposed Commission, and describes its duties and responsibilities. The Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon passage by the City Council and approval of the Mayor.

Section 1 defines the purpose of the Ordinance as creating an Oversight Commission to promote equity, representation, and accountability across City departments and ensure that Boston's LGBTQIA2S+ residents are formally represented and continuously engaged in shaping City policies and priorities.

Section 2 provides definitions for key terms used throughout the Ordinance, including: "City," "Transgender," "Gender-diverse," "Gender-identity," "Intersex," and "LGBTQIA2S+ communities."

Section 3 establishes the Transgender, Gender-Diverse, Intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ Oversight Commission and outlines its structure, responsibilities, and operations, including its functions, reporting obligations, membership composition, eligibility requirements, terms of service, leadership, staffing, attendance standards, and compensation. Under this section, the Commission is tasked with coordinating with City departments and agencies; advising the Mayor on issues affecting LGBTQIA2S+ residents; assisting with policy and budget recommendations; designing projects and programs that promote equity for transgender, gender-diverse, intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ residents; conducting outreach and serving as a liaison to community groups; collaborating with the Department of Intergovernmental Relations on state and federal matters; and monitoring City policies and programs through an intersectional lens. With respect to membership, the Ordinance creates a fifteen-member body of Boston residents appointed by the Mayor, consisting of nine district representatives nominated by the City Council and six members recommended by civil rights and community organizations, including at least two youth aged fourteen or older. Under this section, member terms are structured so that district nominees serve two-year terms, three members (including two youth) serve three-year terms, and the remaining three members serve four-year terms, with any vacancy filled for the remainder of the unexpired term and any member serving more than ninety days past expiration deemed reappointed until replaced. Section 3 further establishes



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eligibility standards requiring that members possess relevant knowledge and experience and clarifies that elected officials are not eligible for appointment. Regarding meeting requirements, the Commission must meet monthly during its first year and submit quarterly updates to the City Council. Subsequently, it must meet at least six times annually and provide an annual report to the City Clerk, Mayor, and City Council. With respect to leadership and staffing, the Commission must convene within thirty days of its establishment to elect a Chair for a two-year term, and the Mayor must appoint an Executive Director—nominated by community advocates—to serve full-time, advise the Commission, hold department-head authority, and function as a voting member. Section 3 also specifies that members may be removed for missing more than one-third of meetings within a twelve-month period unless an exception applies, requires meetings to be accessible and include remote participation options, and authorizes an annual stipend for all members.

Section 4 directs the City to commission a voluntary, confidential, comprehensive quality-of-life study focusing on the experiences of transgender, gender-diverse, intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ residents.

Section 5 governs implementation and declares that the City Council shall hold a hearing upon receipt of the Commission's annual report to evaluate implementation, enforcement, and benchmarks related to LGBTQIA2S+ equity across City departments.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Thursday, June 26, 2025, and a working session on Thursday, November 13, 2025, to discuss Docket #0969. The Committee heard testimony from representatives of the Administration and the community, including: Mariangely Solis-Cervera, Chief of Equity, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet; Jullianne Lee, Director of Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement (MOLA); Kimberly Rhoten, Director of Policy, MOLA; Maya Getter, Senior Policy Advisor, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet; as well as Mickie Jones, Milaun Casimir, Chastity Bowick, and Shantel Alix Fernandez.

At the June 26th hearing, the Administration's testimony emphasized the City's commitment to equity and collaboration, while expressing concern that establishing a new oversight commission as proposed could overlap with existing work or strain limited resources. The Administration explained that the Office, working within the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, has shifted from a primarily programming-based model toward one centered on essential services, informed by community feedback gathered through recent citywide surveys and noting that more than forty percent of MOLA's budget now funds housing assistance, emergency relief, and legal support, and that new resources—such as an online directory and a discrimination response guide—have been launched to help residents navigate barriers to safety and inclusion. Community advocates testified that the proposed Commission would strengthen representation, transparency, and partnership between the City and LGBTQIA2S+ residents. Councilors acknowledged the Administration's resource concerns but emphasized that the proposal was community-driven and intended to complement, rather than compete with, the City's existing work.

During the November 13th working session, the Committee revisited outstanding areas of negotiation between the Committee and the Administration, focusing in particular on reporting requirements, appointment timelines, the yearly review structure, and the inclusion of the quality-of-life study. The Committee discussed how the Commission's annual reporting obligations would function in practice, with Councilors emphasizing that a yearly hearing is essential for ensuring accountability, informing budget



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decisions, and providing consistent opportunities for community engagement. The Committee also reviewed the nomination and onboarding timeline, ultimately finding consensus that a six-month implementation period would be necessary to ensure safety, privacy, and capacity-appropriate review of applicants. The Administration expressed concern about incorporating a one-time study into a long-term advisory framework. However, Councilors emphasized the community's expectation that the study serve as a baseline for the Commission's future work.

Summary of Amendments

Language was revised to shift the functions of the proposed Commission from a citywide oversight and monitoring body to an advisory and community-engagement Council focused on supporting MOLA's programs and priorities. Language was amended under Sections 1-5 and 7, striking *Section 2. Definitions* in its entirety. In its new draft, the Ordinance includes the following sections: SECTION 1: Establishment of the Community Advisory Council; SECTION 2: Purpose and Functions; SECTION 3: Composition and Membership; SECTION 4: Operations and Support; SECTION 5: Implementation; SECTION 6: Severability; and SECTION 7: Effective Date.

Section 1 of the new draft strikes language establishing a Transgender, Gender-Diverse, Intersex, and LGBTQIA2S+ Oversight Commission. In its place, new language was inserted to establish a Community Advisory Council and a Steering Committee within MOLA. As amended, Section 1 now reads as follows:

"SECTION 1: Establishment of the Community Advisory Council

There shall be established within the Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement a Community Advisory Council, hereinafter referred to as "the Council," composed of representatives from organizations, businesses, institutions, or individuals serving the LGBTQIA2S+ community in the City of Boston. Within the Council, there shall be a steering committee composed of eleven (11) members that will work directly with MOLA in an advisory capacity to support the development, evaluation, and promotion of programs, policies, and services that improve the lives of LGBTQIA2S+ residents."

Section 2 of the new draft strikes language describing the Commission's oversight purpose, cross-department responsibilities, and the required study. In its place, new language was inserted describing advisory functions for MOLA, including monthly meetings, feedback mechanisms, and support for collaboration. As amended, Section 2 now reads as follows:

"SECTION 2: Purpose and Functions

Duties. *The Council's duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:*

- 1. Hold monthly meetings to provide feedback and community-informed perspectives on programs and policy initiatives advanced by MOLA*
- 2. Support MOLA with interdepartmental efforts by encouraging resource-sharing, and collective problem-solving across the community ecosystem and collaborate on strategic goals to strengthen LGBTQIA2S+ community infrastructure across the City.*



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3. *Advise on service gaps and opportunities to expand inclusive, affirming resources.”*

Section 3 of the new draft strikes language establishing a 15-member Commission, and language outlining qualifications, duties, and reporting obligations. In its place, new language was inserted to create an open-membership Council, an 11-member Steering Committee, nomination procedures, term lengths, eligibility rules, reporting expectations, provisions for a quality of life study and Special Municipal Employee status. As amended, Section 3 now reads as follows:

“SECTION 3: Composition and Membership

Membership. *The Council shall consist of members representing a diverse array of LGBTQIA2S+ affirming organizations, businesses, institutions and individuals. Participation in the Council shall be open to any individual who resides in the City of Boston or who provides services or support to the LGBTQIA2S+ community within the City.*

Enrollment shall occur through a public facing platform maintained by MOLA or by other reasonable means established by MOLA for this purpose. All council members shall serve without compensation and shall be classified as Special Municipal Employees for purposes of the commonwealth’s Ethics Law, M.G.L. Chapter 268A.

1. Steering Committee

- a. Within the Council, there shall be a Steering Committee composed of eleven (11) individuals appointed by the Mayor; six (6) of whom shall be nominated by members of the City Council.*
- b. Members appointed shall serve for an initial term of two years.*
- c. Individuals may be nominated for appointment to the steering Committee through a public facing platform administered by MOLA.*
- d. Individuals nominated for the Steering Committee shall adhere to the same eligibility requirements and qualifications as the Council.*
- e. In making appointments, the Mayor may consider recommendations and nominations submitted by all City residents including members of the City Council, members of the Council, and City Agencies.*
- f. The Steering Committee shall guide the Council’s priorities, assist in developing recommendations, and support coordination with the Mayor’s Office and relevant City departments.*



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- a. *Elected officials in Municipal, State, or Federal government shall not be eligible to be members of the Steering Committee.*
- b. *Hold quarterly meetings with MOLA to identify policy goals and objectives and measure the success of programs and policy initiatives advanced by the Council and MOLA.*
- c. *Hold quarterly meetings to review data, consolidate Council feedback, and prepare for quarterly meetings with MOLA.*
- d. *Annually, on or before April 1st, the Steering Committee shall collaborate with MOLA and the Council to produce a yearly report pertaining to the work of the Council and the progress of the City to advance the status of LGBTQIA2S+ residents. The report shall include policy and budgetary recommendations based on city-wide aggregated data and community feedback. The Committee shall submit the report on behalf of the Council to the City Clerk who shall forward the report to the Mayor and shall file the report and include the docket on the agenda of the next-occurring meeting of the Boston City Council. The Committee shall testify on its annual report before the City Council upon request.*
- e. *Shall support MOLA in establishing goals and priorities for a City-wide quality of life study focused on the lived experiences, challenges, and contributions of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. The study shall collect qualitative and quantitative data that identifies the barriers, assets, and pathways that shape the well-being and advancement of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.*
- f. *Members of the Steering Committee shall serve without compensation, but shall, upon the approval of the Mayor, be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in performing their duties."*

Section 4 of the new draft strikes language regarding the Quality of Life Study, addressing the same in Section 3 instead. Section 4 was replaced with language outlining operational support responsibilities, including MOLA's role in convening meetings and maintaining a webpage. As amended, Section 4 now reads as follows:

"SECTION 4: Operations and Support

1. *MOLA shall convene and facilitate all Council meetings, provide administrative and logistical support, and set agendas in collaboration with Council members.*
2. *The Council shall meet no fewer than once per month, with quarterly in-person convenings hosted by MOLA.*
3. *MOLA shall maintain a public-facing webpage listing meeting dates, and general information about the Council's work."*



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Section 5 of the new draft strikes language requiring annual City Council hearings on Commission reports. In its place, new language was inserted that adds implementation timelines for nominations and convening the initial cohort. As amended, Section 5 now reads as follows:

“SECTION 5: Implementation

1. *MOLA shall begin accepting nominations and applications to the Council within sixty (60) days of the ordinance’s effective date.*
2. *The initial cohort of members shall be approved and convened within ninety (90) days of the ordinance’s effective date. ”*

Section 7 of the new draft strikes and replaces language to effectuate the Ordinance six months from the date of passage, as opposed to immediately following.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT.**

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