

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



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS SECURITY AT HIGH-RISE GARAGES IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

- WHEREAS:** There have been a number of suicides that have occurred at other high-rise parking garages in the City over the last few years, including a person who jumped to their death from a high-rise parking garage in Chinatown last week. Unfortunately, this is the second suicide at the location in a period of two years, and a number of suicides have also occurred at the Tufts Medical Center parking garage, Boston Medical Center garage, and the Renaissance parking garage; *and*
- WHEREAS:** These tragic incidents are not often reported due to the “Werther Effect”, the phenomenon where suicide rates increase following the publication of news reports about suicide, and have called attention to the lack of security at parking garages and measures to prevent people from jumping; *and*
- WHEREAS:** While most tall buildings and bridges have barriers or fencing to prevent people who are distressed from jumping, parking garages are often accessible to the public with minimum security or barriers, making it harder to prevent people in distress, or with mental health issues, from jumping; *and*
- WHEREAS:** There are measures for suicide prevention at parking garages aside from installing fencing, including using signage to direct people with suicidal thoughts to call the suicide prevention hotline, installing cameras to monitor top levels, putting landscaping to block an open landing area, and training parking garage staff on suicide prevention; *and*
- WHEREAS:** In 2019, following three separate incidents involving five suicides at the Renaissance Park Garage, fences and signs were put up around the garage to prevent suicide; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The city should work proactively with parking garage operators to prevent these tragedies from happening, and discuss measures to secure high rise garages and help prevent suicides at these sites; *and*
- WHEREAS:** At the Massachusetts State House, there is currently a bill S.1395, *An Act Relative to suicide prevention signage at certain facilities* by Senator Paul R. Feeney that mandates signs with the 988 behavioral health emergency line and the words “You Are Not Alone” to be posted in parking garages; *and*

WHEREAS: According to the most recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. suicide rates are the highest they've been since 1941. Between 2000 and 2018, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) reported that suicide rates increased by 36%. This dropped during Covid but is now back at its peak. In 2022, 49,476 humans tragically took their lives; *and*

WHEREAS: Suicide is preventable and it is critical that we have a broader conversation about access to mental health resources and counseling, as well as how high-rise facilities such as parking garages can employ measures that help prevent suicide. We must be proactive to prevent lives lost to suicide; *and*

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss security at high-rise garages in the City of Boston and measures to suicide prevention at these sites. Representatives from the area parking garage operators, Boston Police, Boston Public Health Commission, and other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.

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