

Offered by City Councilor Gabriela Coletta and Councilor Louijeune, Arroyo, Breadon, Fernandes Anderson, Lara, Mejia, Murphy, Worrell and Flynn



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING CONTRACEPTION AND MENSTRUAL PRODUCT VENDING MACHINES IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS: The accessibility of affordable contraception has emerged at the forefront of public discourse since the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization U.S Supreme Court decision overruling both Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey; *and*

WHEREAS: Having the power to decide if, when, and under what circumstances to get pregnant, carry a child to term, and raise that child increases an individual's opportunities to be healthy, complete their education, and pursue the future they want. But too many people lack access to safe, affordable birth control and emergency contraception; *and*

WHEREAS: According to Power to Decide, there are 361,810 women in Massachusetts living in contraceptive deserts with 70,750 women in Suffolk County categorized as "in need" of publicly-funded contraceptives and supplies; *and*

WHEREAS: As some states seek to restrict reproductive freedoms, Boston University recently launched "Plan-B" vending machines. These machines offer students the "morning after" pill at a price that is significantly less than some over-the-counter options and with privacy not afforded by a trip to the pharmacy; *and*

WHEREAS: Vending machines selling condoms and emergency contraception have been installed on college campuses across the country, especially in the wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson; *and*

WHEREAS: Boston Public Schools already implements a condom accessibility policy that allows for parents to opt-out at the beginning of the year for all new high school-age students; *and*

WHEREAS: The Mayor's Office of Women Advancement is launching a menstrual product vending machine pilot program in partnership with SOS, a start-up company with locations in Massachusetts and Florida that seek to provide access to menstrual products on the go; *and*

WHEREAS: Menstrual products are necessary for half of our population and essential to all menstruating individuals' personal and mental health. Period poverty, or not being able to afford menstrual products, is a common concern for low-income menstruating individuals in high-income countries; *and*

WHEREAS: According to a 2021 study published in the BMC Women's Health Journal, many young menstruating individuals cannot afford products to meet their monthly needs, especially Black and Brown individuals. This may impact their mental well-being due to the shame and stigma associated with a lack of income or accessibility to affordable products; *and*

WHEREAS: As Boston launches a pilot program of vending machines already equipped with menstrual products, and given the urgency to provide birth control and emergency contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies, the City should consider including all items in locations with the highest need; *and*

BE IT ORDERED,

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss vending machines that provide contraception and menstrual products in the City of Boston, and that the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, with other advocacy organizations including MassNOW, Reproductive Equity Now, Planned Parenthood, and other stakeholders invited to testify.

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