Offered by City Councilors Julia Mejia, Breadon, Culpepper, FitzGerald, Flynn, Louijeune, Murphy, Pepén, Santana, Weber, and Worrell

CITY OF BOSTON

IN CITY COUNCIL

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF PRIVATE FUNDRAISING IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, Boston Public Schools (BPS) are primarily funded through local, state, and federal public sources, yet many individual schools rely on private fundraising activities to supplement their budgets and support instructional programming, extracurricular activities, staffing, and student services; *and*

WHEREAS, There is currently no publicly available, districtwide system that tracks the sources, amounts, or uses of private funds raised and spent by individual Boston Public Schools, as the district does not collect or publicly report this information in a consistent manner; *and*

WHEREAS, In 2018, in the interest of trust, transparency, and fiscal responsibility, Boston Public Schools retained an independent accounting firm to audit school-based accounts and affiliated organizations for the years 2013 through 2018, providing a one-time snapshot of private fundraising across the district; *and*

WHEREAS, The audit revealed that approximately one-third of schools had affiliated 501(c)(3) nonprofit fundraising organizations, and that schools with these nonprofit arms were among the highest fundraisers districtwide, while many other schools had limited or no access to private fundraising resources; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston Public Schools encourages schools engaged in private fundraising to partner with the Boston Education Fund (BEDF), a 501(c)(3) organization that serves as a fiscal agent for school-based funds and provides financial management and reporting services; *and*

WHEREAS, Not all schools utilize BEDF accounts, and there is no publicly available reporting on the balances, expenditures, or distribution of privately raised

funds held through BEDF or other independent school-affiliated entities; *and*

WHEREAS, Pursuant to a Superintendent's Circular, any school seeking to establish an independent 501(c)(3) organization must receive district approval and submit annual reporting to Boston Public Schools, including the organization's operating budget and a rationale for the need for an independent nonprofit structure; *and*

WHEREAS, While such reporting requirements exist, enforcement has been inconsistent and the information submitted by school-affiliated nonprofits has not been made publicly available, limiting transparency and public understanding of how private funds are distributed and used across the district; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston Public Schools are currently facing a projected $53 million budget shortfall, requiring difficult fiscal decisions at both the district and school levels, including program reductions, staffing impacts, and constrained resources; *and*

WHEREAS, In this context of budgetary constraint, the absence of transparent, publicly accessible information about private fundraising and school-based accounts raises concerns about equity, accountability, and the uneven ability of schools to supplement public funding through private means; *and*

WHEREAS, The public, families, educators, and policymakers have a right to understand the full financial picture of resources held and spent for the benefit of Boston Public Schools, including both public appropriations and privately raised funds; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED*:* That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to examine transparency, accountability, equity, and oversight related to private fundraising, school-affiliated nonprofit organizations, and privately held funds supporting Boston Public Schools.

Filed in Council: February 25, 2026