City of Boston
Mayor Michelle Wu
Licensing Board

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Executive Secretary:
Daniel R. Green

THE LICENSING BOARD FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON'S ADVISORY REGARDING SAFETY CONCERNS AND BEST PRACTICES IN NIGHTCLUBS AND OTHER LICENSED ESTABLISHMENTS

Issued: November 22, 2021

The primary goal of the Licensing Board for the City of Boston (the "Board") is to ensure the safety and security of patrons at all of our licensed premises. In recent weeks, local, national, and international news outlets have reported an increased number of reports of illicit, non-consensual drugging occurring at bars, nightclubs, and other nightlife venues. Specifically, there has been a reported uptick in cases of drinks being spiked or "roofied."

The Board therefore issues this Advisory to remind Licensees of obligations and best practices related to patron safety.

1. It is each Licensee's responsibility to run a business that is safe for its patrons and free of illegal activity.

2. Licensees should establish security plans, regardless of whether one has been formally required by the Board. Security plans should include an overview of the operations/security at the licensed premise, the locations of security cameras, training policies and procedures, and policies and procedures regarding inspection of identification, dispersal of patrons, and addressing reports of illegal activity.

3. Licensees must ensure that their employees call 911 to report criminal activity or serious medical emergencies such as drug overdoses or severe impairment.

4. Licensees should call 911 or otherwise notify police to report suspicious or predatory behavior and when a problem patron or severely intoxicated patron is ejected.

5. Licensees must make clear to all managers, employees, and private contractors that they are expected to cooperate with police officers, officials, and investigators following a reported incident.

6. It is recommended that Licensees install functioning and properly maintained surveillance cameras mounted to show patrons entering and exiting licensed premises, entering and exiting restrooms, as well as positioned to provide coverage for blind spots, entrances, exits, service areas, hallways, stairways, and dance floors. Licensees should maintain video recordings for at least 30 days, and should immediately provide recordings to the Boston Police Department and the Board upon request.

7. Licensees must ensure that all employees are adequately trained for their positions. This training should include security training for security personnel that includes techniques to de-escalate potential violent encounters and difficult situations and alcohol awareness training for bar staff. All staff should be trained in recognizing and preventing sexual assault.
8. Licensees should post information in conspicuous places reminding patrons of how to protect themselves and encouraging patrons to seek drug testing if they believe they have been a victim of a drugging incident. This information should include, among other things, a reminder to patrons not to accept drinks from strangers and not to leave any drink uncovered or unattended. Additional information to post can include awareness of non-medical indicators of a drugged drink, such as a change in the color of a drink, sinking ice cubes, excessive bubbles, or foggy appearance of a drink.

Failure to adhere to any of the above, previously issued orders or advisories currently in effect, the Rules and Regulations of the Board and the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission, and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding the sale and service of alcohol will result in disciplinary action from the Board including, but not limited to, the immediate suspension of any license issued by the Board.

Claims of ignorance of the law, the Legislation, or the Advisory are not a defense.

Any questions should be directed to the Board's Executive Secretary, who can be reached at (617) 635-4170 or danny.green@boston.gov.

For the Board,

Daniel R. Green

Daniel R. Green, Esq.
Executive Secretary