MINIARD
CULPEPPER
BOSTON CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 7

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September 27, 2026

COMMUNICATION FROM COUNCILOR MINIARD CULPEPPER REGARDING CONCERNS RAISED BY FRUGAL BOOKSTORE

Dear Council Colleagues:

I am writing to share concerns raised by my constituent, Clarrissa Cropper, owner of Inner City Business Ventures, the parent company of Multicultural Book World and Frugal Bookstore. Ms. Cropper contacted my office regarding the specific identification of Frugal Bookstore in a Council filing concerning findings by the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General related to Boston Public Schools purchasing practices.

Frugal Bookstore has operated in Roxbury for 18 years and has established itself as an important Black-owned community business and a trusted source of culturally relevant literature. The bookstore works with Boston Public Schools teachers and administrators to provide books that reflect the experiences of African American, Latino, Haitian, Cape Verdean, Asian, and other students throughout the district.

Ms. Cropper strongly disputes the characterization that Frugal Bookstore improperly overcharged BPS for shipping and handling. She has expressed concern that her business was publicly named without first being contacted and given an opportunity to provide relevant documentation, explain its pricing practices, or respond to the allegation. She also questions why Frugal Bookstore was specifically identified while other businesses referenced in the Inspector General's report were not named in the filing.

The City Council has an important responsibility to investigate the use of public funds and ensure accountability within City departments. At the same time, when a legislative filing specifically identifies a local business, particularly a small, community-based business, we must take reasonable steps to ensure that the information presented is accurate, appropriately contextualized, and not stated as a settled conclusion before the affected party has had an opportunity to respond.

Public allegations can create immediate and lasting reputational and economic harm. Even when a business subsequently provides evidence disputing an allegation, the original characterization may continue to affect its customers, partnerships, employees, and standing within the community. Ms. Cropper should therefore be given a meaningful opportunity to provide documentation, respond during any Council hearing on this matter, and request any correction or clarification that the available evidence may warrant.

Please see the letter from my constituent, Clarrissa Cropper, below.

Sincerely,

Miniard Culpepper
Boston City Councilor | District 7

September 27, 2026

My name is Clarrissa Cropper, and I am the owner of Inner City Business Ventures which is the parent company of Multicultural Book World and Frugal Bookstore

In 2005 we began working with the owner of Frugal Furniture, located in the Washington Park Mall in Roxbury. We helped the owner build a book business offering and selling books to the surrounding public schools in the area and eventually across the city of Boston.

We earned a reputation for highlighting and providing books written by African American and Latino authors and eventually authors of Asian Haitian, Cape Verdean and other ethnicities that comprise the students within the Boston Public School System.

Teachers reached out to us because they knew we could source books that the children they oversaw educating could identify with. In 2008 Frugal Bookstore opened and we were able to provide the same life affirming books to the community we grew up in and still live in. We hired people from our community to help us build and run the bookstore that has become a staple for so many families, teachers and visitors to Boston and Roxbury in particular.

Since 2008 we were able to purchase the business from the owner as we continued to build a reputation not only among the people of Roxbury, but across the city of Boston. And as of today, we have been in business in our community for 18 years.

Many BPS teachers and administrators continue to reach out to us to provide them with culturally affirming book titles that they can use in their classrooms from the Early Education Dept, Pre K, Kindergarten and grades 1 through 12. And over the past 18 years we have established our business among BPS teachers and administrators as one of the top bookstores to seek out when they need new and culturally affirming book titles with lists, recommendations they can select from

We have cemented our business as a provider of culturally relevant literature, our bookstore remains a very well sought after place to go for the community of Boston, visitors to Boston seek us out as one of the places to visit when in Boston and Roxbury. an

We recently learned that we are named in a report put forth by the Massachusetts inspector general that has to do with mismanagement of public tax dollars being used by BPS. In part the report states that we have been overcharging BPS for shipping and handling when they purchase books from our company. A charge that is totally wrong, and it is an accusation that caused immediate harm to our business reputation. And not only is the accusation not true in respect to our business, we have information that could have easily been provided to councilor Erin Murphy if the same time taken to get the measure to a hearing hastily, had been taken to reach out to our business to speak with us and learn the facts of the matter.

The facts are still clearly in black and white and readily available to the councilor but instead the councilor chose to not reach out to my business and enter the information into a public record explicity naming my business and none of the many other businesses named in the IG's report. Why are we being singled out.

The mention of my business has drawn unnecessary criticism and we are being viewed as scammers and not worthy of the accolades we have earned over the past 18 years in our home city and neighborhood.

The document incorrectly stated and publicized on social media has the potential to ignite a cancel culture around us, customers not wanting to patronize our business, we could lose sales because opinions on the matter are being put forth without the proper context we could have provided to Councilor Murphy if she had given us the opportunity to share it with her.

Other businesses and organizations in and around the City of Boston may not want to partner with us because of the association due to the misinformation and any media or public coverage this could garner. And now, even if we do present proof of the misinformation, the public may or may not change their view and boycott us.

This mistake can easily lead to people not wanting to work for or with us in the future because they may not want to associate or be employed by a business who they heard is overcharging or stealing from BPS.

The impact that this is having on us personally and professionally is very stressful. It's taking time and energy away from focusing on other business matters because we are putting our energy and attention on clearing our name as connivers and the black owned business in Boston that cheats.

It has taken us 18 years to build a solid reputation in this city and having graduated from the Boston Public Schools myself, having one child graduate from the Boston Public Schools and another in the 12th grade and preparing to earn a diploma later next year, I have to defend misinformation that could have been easily and correctly offered.

Sincerely,
Clarrissa Cropper, Owner
Inner City Business Ventures