

Offered by Councilors Breadon, Bok, Mejia, Baker, Fernandes Anderson, Arroyo, Flaherty, Coletta, Louijeune, Lara, Murphy and Flynn



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING ON APPROPRIATING FEDERAL RELIEF FUNDS TO STABILIZE AND EXPAND PUBLIC SECTOR PERSONNEL CAPACITY BEYOND PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

- WHEREAS*, A report of the Center for Labor Research and Education at the University of California, Berkeley found that national public sector employment did not recover to its 2008 pre-Great Recession peak until 2019; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The public sector has been a model for secure employment, where governments have historically employed more women and workers of color, who are more likely to have better benefits, greater job security, union representation, and opportunities to work full-time, but the sector’s post-recession period has been characterized as much weaker than previous recoveries; *and*
- WHEREAS*, March 2022 analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data reveal that the public sector has gained back 53 percent of jobs lost since February 2020, while the private sector has recovered 93 percent; *and*
- WHEREAS*, According to a March 2022 report of the MissionSquare Research Institute (formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence) of surveyed state and local government employees, 62 percent reported their organization experiencing more employees leaving their jobs voluntarily since the start of the pandemic, and of those, 78 percent express experiencing a strain on their own workloads; *and*
- WHEREAS*, A January 2022 MissionSquare report also found that 52 percent of public sector workers are inclined to consider leaving their jobs voluntarily, largely driven by burnout and compensation issues amid pandemic work conditions; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Further MissionSquare analyses reported career stage differences in public employee workplace concerns, with early career workers under age 40 being three-times more likely than later career workers to consider changing jobs due to the pandemic; *and*
- WHEREAS*, On January 6, 2022, the United States Department of the Treasury released the “Final Rule” for the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), specifying eligible uses categories; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Recipients may use relief funds to (1) replace lost public sector revenue; (2) respond to far-reaching public health and negative economic impacts of the pandemic by supporting households, small businesses, impacted industries, nonprofits, and the public sector; (3) provide premium pay for essential workers in critical sectors; and (4) invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure; *and*

- WHEREAS*, The Final Rule outlines three main eligibility categories to bolster the City’s capacity and workforce: public safety, public health, and human services staff; government employment and rehiring public sector staff; and effective service delivery; *and*
- WHEREAS*, It is an eligible use for the City to dedicate relief funds for payroll and covered benefits for the portion of eligible staff time spent on COVID-19 response; *and*
- WHEREAS*, It is also an eligible use for the City to dedicate relief funds for payroll and covered benefits to restore pre-pandemic employment levels to a baseline of positions which existed on January 27, 2020 but were unfilled or eliminated as of March 3, 2021, as well as to increase the number of budgeted full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel up to 7.5 percent above the pre-pandemic baseline; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The City may also appropriate relief funds to support and retain public sector workers, including additional funding for personnel who experienced pay reductions, to maintain current compensation levels with adjustments for inflation, to provide worker retention incentives, and to cover costs associated with administering hiring, supporting, and retention programs; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Past City budget documents produced by the Office of Budget Management report levels of permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel positions supported by the general fund at 17,093.9 FTEs at the start of 2008 prior to the recession, a low of 16,172.8 FTEs in 2012, growth to the pre-pandemic 2020 baseline of 17,693.6 FTEs, 17,714.9 FTEs in January 2022, and a projection of 18,145.0 FTEs by 2023; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The current projection of FTEs supported in the general fund by January 2023 only represents a 2.5 percent growth over pre-pandemic staffing levels, and recovery funds could help bolster permanent public sector jobs over the span of multiple fiscal years up to 7.5 percent above the pre-pandemic baseline to reach approximately 19,020.6 FTEs, an increase of up to 875.6 FTEs (4.8 percent) over the projection for 2023; *and*
- WHEREAS*, While it is necessary to enact sound fiscal policies to control and monitor costs of personnel and benefits, current and historic labor market trends and unprecedented public sector attrition must be taken into account to ensure the provision of adequate services to all residents in the City of Boston through an equitable recovery; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Unless the City factors the needs of its workforce—especially those without a collective bargaining unit—into a post-pandemic recovery, we risk further reducing local government capacity to properly function, deliver services, and be adequately prepared for the next unexpected crisis; *NOW, THEREFORE BE IT*
- ORDERED*: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss appropriating Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds of the American Rescue Plan Act to stabilize and expand public sector personnel capacity beyond pre-pandemic levels, and that Administration officials from the Personnel Review Committee, Administration and Finance, Office of Budget Management, Office of Human Resources, and interested members of the public be invited to attend.