

## **Communication of Administration in Response to Chair Ways and Means Budget Letter**

### ***More Supports for Housing and Food Insecurity***

- The proposed budget includes \$12,350,000 in housing vouchers
- As part of the energy saver program announced at the State of the City, the City will help renters, homeowners, and business owners decide on the best investments to make in their homes and access the financial supports available to pay for them, reducing their energy bills and improving building performance.
- The Mayor's Office of Housing has maintained a long standing commitment totaling \$387,000 to support residents with access to legal counsel knowing that keeping people in their homes is always the most effective response to avoid homelessness.
- The Mayor's Office of Housing's special appropriation for housing includes \$1.8 million for the Tenant Stabilization Fund (Rent Relief) and \$2.7 million for Homeless Prevention and Emergency Housing Assistance.
- The City is expanding the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb) program, which provides SNAP participants with a 50% discount on fresh fruits and vegetables, to make it easier and more affordable for food insecure residents to get nutritious food. In March, the City launched DUFb at the Dorchester Food Co-Op, and will soon launch at Nubian Market, joining Daily Table's Boston stores, Bella's Market, El Valle de la Sultana, La Union Market and Butchery, and Davey's Super Market.

### ***Protecting Boston's Diversity & Inclusion***

- The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement strives to strengthen the ability of immigrants to fully and equitably participate in economic, civic, social, and cultural life in Boston. The departmental budget includes resources in excess of \$1 million to support new arrivals and existing immigrant residents with legal and transition services to support participation in Boston's community. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement maintains \$288,000 for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Boston Public Library continues its FY24 investment of new staff to support multi-lingual services and ESOL programming. There are also ESOL offerings through Boston Public Schools, the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, the Office of Workforce Development and Age Strong Commission.
- The proposed FY26 operating budget for the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet is \$14,679,978

### ***Increased Investments in Quality of Life Issues***

- The City entered into an improved trash contract that will provide additional contracted labor and require more reliable trucks and technology with budget increases of \$12.8 million. The total trash budget is \$77.5 million.
- Sidewalks are continuing to be improved and ADA ramps are being built across the City and the list of citywide sidewalks will be provided to the City Council. The Capital Plan includes over \$135 million over the next 5 years in sidewalk reconstruction, roadway resurfacing, and the construction of ADA compliant curb ramps, ensuring safe, reliable, and accessible transportation for all road users.

- The Age Strong Commission, with strong support from the Mayor and City Council, will leverage their Council on Aging state external funds and operating budget to target reducing social isolation for older adults through increased programming across several neighborhoods. These resources will augment state earmarked funding for senior programming in West Roxbury, increasing programming from two days to three days per week. For healthy rides, Age Strong continues to partner with external organizations to provide rides for our seniors to access programming, doctors appointments and grocery stores.
- The Office of Climate Resilience facilitates climate resilience hubs and education using spaces in BPL and BCYF. In FY25, a cooling space RFP is funded by external funds.
- The City is expanding Wicked Free Wifi to key transit hubs and main streets including: Maverick Square, Nubian Square, Mattapan Square, Malcolm X Park. Monthly usage of Wicked Free Wifi ranges between 35,000 and 50,000 unique users every month. Low income residents were twice as likely to report using Wicked Free Wifi regularly than average.
- The City is working with the MAPC and MBI to enable Wicked Free Wifi in corridors and common spaces in over 2 BHA sites, with the goal to cover over 1,500 units in later phases. The City is also leveraging federal funds to cover the installation of infrastructure inside the buildings, and using the fiber built with support of City Council to provide the backhaul.
- The Digital Equity Fund provided direct funding, using \$1 million provided by Mass Broadband Institute, to 35 community organizations; in 6 months they: enrolled over 1,000 people in LifeLine, distributed 1,100 refurbished devices, and trained over 7,000 residents on new digital skills at all levels of learning

### ***Expanded Programs for our Youth***

- Investing in unhoused students and English language learners, the City and BPS has proposed investing an additional \$10M for Inclusive Practices and \$4M for Bilingual Education, which builds on \$35.9M investment in this area from previous years. This investment has enabled the expansion of the Dual Language program at the Margarita Muñiz Academy to grades 7-8, and the launch of new Dual Language programs in SY25-26 at the Quincy, Sarah Roberts, Blackstone, and McKay Elementary Schools, and planning for the launch of a first-in-the-nation Cape Verdean Kriolu Dual Language Program in SY26-27.
- As promised, every Boston Public School student who wanted a summer job received one – a total of more than 10,000 students participating in summer jobs overall. The funds to support the youth jobs program come from both operations and external funds. This year, the YEO general fund program funding totals \$22.4 million – double the amount spent in FY22.
- BPS received a \$5M investment for school and program expansions. Programming supported by this investment includes STEM career training and early college options. Overall preparing students for college and careers is an organizational priority for BPS.
  - These investments have enabled new AP course offerings and new early college and dual enrollment programs across our high schools, including East Boston High School, New Mission, Fenway High School, Holland Tech, and Charlestown

High School. The overall number of students participating in early college programs has more than quadrupled from SY21-22 to SY24-25.

- This year's investments in the Secondary office will fund new STEM programs at Holland Tech and Madison Park
- BCYF is expanding toddler play from four sites to eight new sites and additional days to allow for our caregivers and toddlers to have a place to come together and play inside. BCYF is also continuing to work with residents in different neighborhoods to meet the needs of programming.

### ***Community Safety Commitments***

- BPHC is sustaining a robust slate of programs that perform syringe disposal and collection, including the city-wide Mobile Sharps Team and a workforce development syringe cleanup model with the Newmarket BID. BPHC is expanding this work, with new initiatives planned for the Downtown area and Nubian Square/Lower Roxbury.
- The new BPD community interaction teams will continue to provide a visible presence in neighborhoods while collaborating with community stakeholders to improve quality of life, increase trust, and reduce violence in the City.
- The City will continue to support families that are the victims of homicide and has moved last year's council amendment of \$500,000 over to the Boston Public Health Commission.

### ***Expanding Small Business Assistance***

- The Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs and Licensing—in collaboration with the Offices of Nightlife Economy and Small Business—host weekly in person and virtual office hours, supported individual entrepreneurs in person with understanding or filling out their application, and organized in person community workshops to engage potential applicants and community members on understanding the process and answering relevant questions.
- Over the last year, the Office of Small Business supported 133 individual neighborhood businesses with close to \$1.1 million in technical assistance, totaling over 4,000 hours of support. Existing contracts with technical assistance providers contain provisions to work with new liquor license awardees, with this assistance continuing to be provided.

### ***Government Productivity***

- In collaboration with DOIT and ISD, the City continues to find ways to streamline permitting processes and support
- The FY26 budget includes investments in the Elections Department to help implement necessary operational reforms and improvement