

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS LIZ BREADON, RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, GABRIELA COLETTA ZAPATA, MEJIA, PEPÉN, SANTANA, WEBER, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS THE ROLE OF PUBLICLY-OWNED GROCERY STORES IN ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

- WHEREAS*, Access to healthy and affordable food is a basic necessity, yet many Boston residents live in neighborhoods classified as food deserts, where full-service grocery stores are scarce and families must rely on corner stores or travel long distances for fresh groceries; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Grocery prices have risen since the COVID-19 pandemic, straining household budgets and disproportionately impacting working families, while consolidation and recent closures of affordable food retailers have heightened the urgency of exploring sustainable public-sector interventions; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Publicly-owned grocery stores can be structured to prioritize community benefit over profit, enabling lower prices, better food access, and stronger local sourcing, and may operate independently or in partnership with non-profits, cooperatives, or private operators; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The City of Boston's Office of Food Justice works to build a food system that is equitable, resilient, and sustainable, and its strategic goals include building access and distribution systems for fresh, culturally relevant food citywide and leveraging City procurement to support regional and diverse producers; *and*
- WHEREAS*, A September 2025 Boston Indicators report highlights that recent federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) could put tens of thousands of Greater Boston residents at risk of losing benefits or facing new barriers to food access, underscoring the importance of local strategies to ensure equitable access to affordable, healthy food; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Research has documented that while most Boston neighborhoods now have at least one grocery store, disparities persist, with some areas continuing to have the lowest grocery store access per capita and others disproportionately served by corner stores with more limited product variety; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Other municipalities across the country have piloted or proposed publicly-owned or supported grocery stores as a means to stabilize access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food, particularly in communities where private chains have withdrawn or declined to invest; *NOW, THEREFORE BE IT*
- ORDERED*: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the role of publicly-owned grocery stores in addressing food insecurity, and that representatives of city agencies, including the Office of Food Justice, GrowBoston, and the Boston Public Health Commission, community-based organizations, as well as community-based organizations, relevant stakeholders, and interested members of the public, be invited to attend.

Filed on: October 6, 2025