



**BOSTON CITY COUNCIL**  
**WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE**

March 17, 2026

Mayor Michelle Wu  
1 City Hall Sq.  
Boston, MA 02201

**Re: City Council FY2027 Budget Priorities**

Dear Mayor Wu:

I am writing to you in my role as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee about the Council's priorities for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. My Council colleagues and I probably will not uniformly agree on every aspect of the budget, but based on a working session, a public testimony hearing, two pre-budget hearings held with your office, and our collective experience working on the FY25 and FY26 budgets, I have drafted the following list of priorities shared by the Council that we believe will best serve the needs of Boston residents.

My Council colleagues and I understand the the City faces real economic headwinds at this time – rising health care costs, lower state and federal aid, rising wages, the inability to tap additional sources of revenue due to the constraints of Prop 2½ and home rule – and the need to be fiscally disciplined at a time when Boston residents are facing marked increases in their property tax bills or their rent. As a result, in addition to listing priorities for investment, I have taken the additional step of including several criteria that I recommend your team look at to identify where money can be moved from to support our jointly held budget priorities without impacting vital city services.

In a pre-budget hearing on March 5, 2026, Mayor's Office of Housing Chief Sheila Dillon, when asked what areas the Council should look to bolster in the FY27 budget, said, "I would right now in this time, especially with this federal administration, prioritize our most vulnerable populations." At a time when we are being asked to do more with less, I hope that Chief Dillon's words will serve as the lodestar for all of us in our budget review process. Below are the Chair's recommendations for the FY27 budget:

**I. Housing**

In the FY26 budget amendments, the City Council prioritized housing, amending the budget to support City Housing Vouchers (\$1.6 million), the Access to Counsel Program (\$450,000), BHA homeownership vouchers (\$300,000), Fair Housing testers (\$100,000), and tenant stabilization (\$50,000). The housing crisis remains a persistent issue in Boston. With the increasing costs of

housing and the outstanding need for the construction of thousands of units, the pressure will remain on Boston families. Moreover, the housing crisis continues to fall most heavily on young mothers of color, leading to projections that the number of BPS students experiencing homelessness (which is already over 5,000 students in FY26) will increase in FY27.

The Council recently heard from Chief Dillon that the need for affordable housing in Boston far outstrips our ability to provide it for our residents, leading to families struggling to pay their rent and homelessness. The Council, therefore, seeks the maintenance of funding for the Office of Housing Stability, City Housing Vouchers, the Access to Counsel Program, the Office of Fair Housing and Stability, the Tenant Stabilization Fund or other emergency funds for rent and expenses, and homeownership vouchers.

In addition, the City should find a way to fund BPS's Emergency Homelessness Intervention Program, which has helped thousands of BPS families remain housed since 2020. The City should continue to fund the Acquisition Opportunity Program and explore funding opportunities for Community Land Trusts.

## **II. Immigrant Communities**

The draconian measures taken by the Trump Administration to target immigrant communities across the country has led to families being torn apart, residents being disappeared off of our streets, and to a general sense of fear in our neighborhoods. Councilors have reaffirmed the City's dedication to the Boston Trust Act, teamed up with community advocates to stage Know Your Rights and observer trainings, and supported Your Honor's landmark Executive Order protecting our communities from abuses of federal immigration agents.

In the FY26 budget amendments, the Council prioritized help for immigrant communities by allocating \$350,000 for legal services through the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement (MOIA) and \$275,000 for ESOL classes for parents of BPS students. And that was roughly seven months before the Trump Administration declared war on immigrants and Sanctuary Cities.

In addition, at a pre-budget hearing held on March 5, 2026, the Council heard from MOIA Chief Monique Nguyen that while the City distributed grants for approximately \$900,000 to local organizations for immigrant-related legal services in FY26, the need was roughly three times that. More recently, Your Honor and Councilor Ruthzee Louijeune announced a collective initial commitment of more than \$3.1 million in new funding from The Boston Foundation, Barr Foundation, and United Way of Massachusetts Bay to address the critical needs of Boston's immigrant communities. Accordingly, the Council seeks adequate funding for MOIA for

immigration legal services, mutual aid, community building, immigrant youth advancement, and ESOL classes in FY27.

### **III. Food Justice**

The Trump Administration has also declared war on people in need of food. In November 2025, the United States Department of Agriculture halted SNAP benefits, citing lack of funding, leading to a legal battle that went all the way to the Supreme Court. Even though benefits were restored, the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” limited their accessibility by instituting stricter work requirements for both seniors and veterans and eliminating benefits for most non-citizens legally in the country. In November and December 2025, local groups stepped in to make sure Boston residents had enough to eat.

As advocates pointed out, even full SNAP benefits do not provide enough food for seniors and struggling families. The City, therefore, should prioritize the Mayor’s Office of Food Justice to support neighborhood-based food pantries, amongst other programs.

### **IV. Youth**

Ever since Mayor Thomas Menino sought to provide jobs for 10,000 Boston kids each summer, the City has greatly benefited from providing our kids with constructive out-of-school activities and paying jobs, making our communities safer and providing financial support for families in need. Your Honor has continued to deliver for our City’s youth with 1,715 jobs during the school year in FY26, and a promise of over 10,500 youth jobs in the summer of 2026.

In FY26, the Council amended the FY26 budget with the following: \$1 million for youth jobs, \$500,000 for college and career readiness, and \$125,000 for youth mentors at the Mildred C. Hailey Apartments. Your Honor should at least level fund and increase if possible these programs and seek additional private funding for youth jobs.

Your Honor should further invest in youth sports leagues and preserve programs with a history of success. Your Honor should invest in youth programming at BCYF centers across the City, and should ensure they are well-staffed. To continue to serve our youth, the Council requests further investments in these areas for FY27.

### **V. Equity, Inclusion, and Economic Opportunity**

In the FY26 budget amendments, the Council also prioritized equity and inclusion by allocating \$100,000 for support services in the Mayor’s Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement (MOLA) and \$25,000 for the Black Male Advancement Commission. It has prioritized economic

opportunity by allocating \$300,000 for storefront revitalization and \$100,000 for increasing capacity within the Licensing Office. With ongoing inequity harming our marginalized communities, the City must continue to prioritize investments in MOLA, the Office of Black Male Advancement, and small and diverse business supports through the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion. The City must continue its work towards equity in contracting. Furthermore, the City should invest in diverse workforce training by supporting community college education.

## **VI. Public Health and Safety**

In the FY26 budget, the Council directed amendments at community safety. These included investments for mental health/emergency preparedness (\$700,000), mounted park rangers (\$50,000), additional programming in the Mayor's Office of Community Safety (\$75,000), and for firefighter cancer screenings (\$100,000).

The City should continue to invest in public health and safety by supporting services for homelessness prevention, substance use interventions, and trauma response, including the BEST team under the Public Health Commission, and the Community Response Team. The City should invest in the Office of Police Accountability and Transparency (OPAT) and should fund improvements in 911 and Emergency Services dispatch communication technologies. It should continue to invest in organizations working in violence prevention, and should prioritize investments in domestic violence and sexual assault prevention across City departments.

Your Honor should also invest in public health measures such as public restrooms and rodent-resistant trash cans across the City. Your Honor should also support investments in community safety by investing in traffic safety improvements in neighborhoods that have called for them. This includes investments in BTM and PWD that will make our streets safer by developing traffic safety plans and, where warranted, speed humps and bike lanes. Your Honor should continue to repair existing bike infrastructure, expand the bike network, fulfill the Safety Surge mandates, secure funding for the fare free bus program, and increase traffic enforcement across the City. Your Honor should re-open the process for safety improvements across the City, as detailed in various transportation access plans.

## **VII. Seniors**

The Council will prioritize maintenance of funding for senior programs such as the pop-up senior center in West Roxbury. Your Honor should fund senior programming across the City, and should implement senior programming across City departments, not limited to the Age Strong Commission. In the current federal environment with increased bureaucratic burdens on our seniors, the City should also fund technical assistance for seniors applying for federal benefits.

## **VIII. Veterans**

Veterans and seniors have made invaluable contributions to every Boston neighborhood – our seniors through a lifetime of work and civic engagement, and our veterans through their service and sacrifice to our country. Ensuring access to affordable housing, healthcare, transportation, and social services is essential to preserving their dignity, independence, and quality of life. As we monitor actions at the federal level, Your Honor should provide adequate funding to the Office of Veterans Engagement, Transition, and Services (Boston VETS) to ensure that the City is able to provide this population with the appropriate programming and technical assistance should there be any issues with accessing benefits due to changes from the federal government.

## **VIII. FY26 Budget Amendments**

As part of the FY26 budget review process, the City Council made \$7.8 million in amendments, and an additional \$1.1 million in recommendations. A list of programmatic amendments that should continue to be funded is included at Attachment 1. The Council requests that all of these amendments receive at least level funding in FY27, and increased funding if fiscally possible.

## **X. Strategies for Fiscal Management**

The Council is well aware that it cannot simply add money to the budget, but rather must find areas to move money from to fund any amendments. In FY25 and FY26, the Council looked at historical trends for each department including the number of long-term job vacancies per year, the amount of unspent funds in each line item within a department, and the amount of funds transferred out of the department at the end of the fiscal year. Where the data showed multiple years of substantial underspending in a department, we flagged a portion of those funds for amendments based on our determination that, given that it was highly unlikely the funds would be spent in the next fiscal year, moving these funds would not damage the department's ability to provide necessary services. In a tight fiscal year, we recommend taking the same approach to the budget as a whole.

## **XI. Police Overtime Pay**

Boston is one of the safest large cities in the United States, if not the safest, in large part due to the work of the Boston Police Department. Moreover, police officers, like all other City workers, should be paid for all of their working time pursuant to the governing collective bargaining agreement. Recent data shows, however, that payments for police overtime for FY26 will exceed \$100M, \$46M over the amount budgeted. From FY20 to FY24, the amount of spending on police overtime was \$405M. When expenses for healthcare are skyrocketing and valuable

programs and staffing will be cut across the City, it is time to get serious about stopping the rapid increase in police overtime spending.

To be clear, the Chair does not recommend a purely symbolic cut of police overtime pay. Officers must be paid for their work and, pursuant to Section 42 of the City Charter, a reduction in the budget for police overtime would not result in a decrease in overtime spending. Rather, it is time to investigate current practices and go to the bargaining table with a concrete demand that will go toward reducing future overtime spending. Without a plan to address overtime pay, the City will continue to face hurdles in providing other necessary City services to Bostonians.

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The word “budget” apparently derives from the old French word “bougette,” which meant a bag that held letters or tools. By the time of the British withdrawal from Boston on March 17, 1776, 250 years ago as of the date of this letter, a budget referred to, not a bag containing tools, but a statement containing probable expenditures and revenues. The proposed FY2027 budget you file with us in April will hold an important blueprint for the future of our City.

In FY26, based on the hard work of prior Chair Brian Worrell and the collaboration between the Council and your office, we presented a budget with amendments that was accepted by Your Honor. I hope to have your partnership again as we remain focused on a FY27 budget that will contain investments that will deliver the services and programming our residents need.

Sincerely,



Benjamin J. Weber  
Boston City Councilor, District 6  
Ways and Means Committee Chair