

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS BENJAMIN J. WEBER, LIZ BREADON, JULIA M. MEJIA, COLETTA ZAPATA, CULPEPPER, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, LOUIJEUNE, MURPHY, PEPÉN, SANTANA, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS STRATEGIES TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS AMONG STUDENTS IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, Boston Public Schools (BPS) reported for the 2023-24 school year that 5,254 students experienced homelessness; for the 2024-25 school year, BPS reported 5,405 students experienced homelessness; and for the 2025-26 school year, BPS projects the number of students experiencing homelessness to again increase, with over 10 percent of the total student population in BPS experiencing homeless; *and*

WHEREAS, In a 2024 report, Boston Indicators, a research center at the Boston Foundation, found that 70 percent of Greater Boston's homeless population is in families. The report went on to say that the scarcity of housing and high rents are contributing to family homelessness; *and*

WHEREAS, In addition to the barriers homeless students face in meeting their basic needs, they also experience challenges in the classroom. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports that the graduation rate for BPS students who experience housing insecurity is 13% lower than for those who do not. Other studies have shown that students who experienced homelessness nationally are much more likely to drop out of school and are less than one-third as likely to be enrolled in a four-year college as stably housed peers; *and*

WHEREAS, The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq., is a federal law designed to require school systems to take steps to ensure homeless students have equal access to an education. For example, the Act requires school districts like BPS to designate local homeless education liaisons to identify homeless students and ensure their enrollment in school. In addition to providing these liaisons in every school, BPS has leveraged partnerships to further ensure homeless students receive the help they need to succeed in school; *and*

WHEREAS, BPS has run a landmark housing stability program called the Emergency Homelessness Intervention Program (EHIP) that has provided stable housing supports for over 2,000 BPS families and prevented over 1,000 BPS families from becoming homeless since 2020; *and*

WHEREAS, Last March, the City released its first-ever Anti-Displacement Action Plan which listed the Access to Counsel as an important component of the City's Eviction Prevention Strategy; *and*

WHEREAS, As mentioned in the Anti-Displacement Action Plan, “evictions disrupt children’s education, leading to absenteeism, learning loss, and difficulty accessing critical school services, all of which can hinder academic achievement. Housing instability also increases stress and trauma in children that can affect overall wellbeing. By providing legal representation to families with school-aged children, this pilot program will help prevent displacement, promoting housing stability that supports both educational continuity and long-term family wellbeing”; *and*

WHEREAS, In 2024 and 2025, the Boston City Council amended the FY25 and FY26 budgets to fund an Access to Counsel program that, through partnerships between the Mayor’s Office of Housing, Boston Public Schools, Greater Boston Legal Services, and Family Aid Boston, provides free legal representation to families with school-aged children who are being threatened with eviction; *and*

WHEREAS, The Access to Counsel program has proven to be successful, allowing Greater Boston Legal Services to assist dozens of families with school-aged children who were facing the threat of eviction in just the first three months after the pilot launched in FY25. The Access to Counsel program is integrated into the EHIP to provide services to families served by that program; *and*

WHEREAS, In written responses the City Council received from BPS to the Council’s Requests for Information on March 4, 2026, and during a Boston City Council Ways and Means Committee briefing on March 5, 2026, BPS CFO David Bloom informed the Council that funding for the EHIP is no longer available for FY27, due to loss of grant funding, amounting to a loss of \$750,000 for services that assist our homeless students and their families; *and*

WHEREAS, BPS and the Mayor’s Office of Housing have confirmed that initiatives like the EHIP and Access to Counsel are vital to serving our homeless student population. In order to adequately address the housing instability crisis that our students are facing, there should be a broader discussion on other strategies and policy solutions to effectively tackle and ultimately eradicate homelessness among our student population; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore methods and partnerships to combat homelessness and housing insecurity among Boston Public Schools students, and that representatives from Boston Public Schools should be invited to attend.

Filed on: March 11, 2026