



Martin J. Walsh
Mayor, City of Boston
1 City Hall Square, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

June 19, 2020

Dear Mayor Walsh,

I am writing to you today to present you with a legislative agenda and set of budget priorities outlined by the members of color of the Boston City Council. During this critical time in our nation's history, we have seen a historic groundswell of advocacy, protests, and support for Black and Brown communities. As the President of the most diverse City Council in Boston's history, I know that we have the opportunity to create meaningful, impactful change that addresses systemic racism in our City.

The recent protests have shed light on deeply seated inequities. While these protests represent a newfound vigor in the movement for greater equity, opportunity, and justice for communities of color, the movement itself is centuries old and I am proud to build on the work of previous generations of organizers and activists. For too long, Black and Brown communities have been excessively policed and disproportionately targeted by state sanctioned violence. While the trauma of police brutality cannot be overstated, we must look deeper - this is about more than just reform. It is about dissecting and reimagining the system which not only allowed for, but actively created Boston's massive racial wealth gap, the 30 year life expectancy gap based on zip code, and most recently the racial disparities in COVID-19 infections and outcomes.

I have been working with my colleagues in both the City Council and state legislature on a number of initiatives which take aim at the root of these systemic inequities. We have been working diligently on an agenda that actively promotes and protects the advancement of Black lives in our City. This agenda consists of budget, legislative, and executive asks:

- 10% reduction of the Boston Police Department budget and overtime budget;
- Allocation of \$300 million to affordable housing subsidies, linkage fund, and other programs to fully develop pipeline projects for mixed income housing for families;
- Increased funding for ONE Plus Boston Mortgage Program, down payment assistance, and artist live/work spaces in communities of color;
- Create Small Business Relief Fund for Black and Brown businesses; invest \$5 million into the fund;
- Ensure that each BPS school has an appropriate number of full time social workers and counselors;
- And support of pending City Council legislation Dockets #: 0224, 0225, 0226, 0232, 0233, 0235, 0683, 0684, and 0811.

For a country built on chattel slavery and a tradition of white supremacy, any action to right history's wrongs is long overdue. I am calling on you to join me and my colleagues in supporting our vision for a more just and equitable future. This agenda represents a crucial first step. But it is just that: a first step. I look forward to working constructively with you on ways that we can continue to uplift communities of color in Boston.

There are a number of policy changes and initiatives that must be implemented immediately to begin the process of reimagining public safety, including:

- Reduce Boston Police Department budget and the overtime budget by 10% and invest in programs like SOAR, the Trauma Team, and mental health and recovery services

- Re-allocate any funding for violence prevention/intervention, currently residing in BPD to the Boston Public Health Commission
- Create a Civilian Review Board with subpoena power to investigate allegations of law enforcement wrongdoing; membership to include community/youth seats
- Implement/enforce universal use of body cameras, including during overtime
- Investigation into use of overtime, cost of discrimination lawsuits, and number of officers who have been arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime
- Release all data on Internal Affairs complaints and Anti-Corruption investigations
- Commit to ending BPD collaboration with the Joint Terrorism Task Force, looking to lessons from the model in San Francisco
- Abolish the gang database, and suspend the sharing of information of individuals suspected of criminal activity with the federal government, specifically ICE
- Commit to creating more transparency and oversight of the BRIC, including regular reports and updates to the City Council
- Commit to adding Black supervisors; currently there are no Black supervisors in the BRIC, no Black supervisors in the gang unit
- Issue public statement supporting Civil Service reform
- Increase diversity of Deputy Superintendents, with input from community
- Public safety dashboard with data by race and neighborhood on: arrest data that includes racial disparities in arrest rates for drug offenses, use of force, complaints against officers, demographics of our police department, stop and frisk, traffic stops, and low level interactions
- Eliminate discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion in law enforcement, such as the hair drug test and promotional exams, retroactivity must be contemplated for hair test, and commit to stop appealing decisions
- Ban facial recognition surveillance
- Ban the use of chokeholds and teargas for crowd control
- Engagement with MAMLEO and LLEGO members

In addition to the systemic changes in the Boston Police Department, other public safety departments, like the Boston Fire Department, must also be examined and revamped. For far too long, women firefighters, mostly women of color, have experienced a culture of harassment, intimidation, and abuse. To address these long-standing issues, we strongly recommend conducting regular sexual harassment anti-racism trainings, ensuring adequate social workers and counselors for firefighters, and installing privacy partitions in bedroom areas in co-ed fire houses. The female liaison position should be selected among the female firefighters, the Vulcans should be involved in solutions regarding BFD, and there must be real accountability for the new BFD Diversity Officer, including tying accountability to budgets and new labor contracts. Finally, it's important to promote and implement diversity initiatives and programs, including strong support and advocacy for the Firefighter Cadet Program.

When it comes to housing, planning, and development, the City must hold developers accountable for equitable planning and for meeting the goals under the Boston Residency Jobs Policy, by levying sanctions against companies in violation. The City must adopt equity in planning standards and standards that incorporate net zero carbon building requirements. Mixed income housing for families must be prioritized in our City's planning, especially in large developments like Suffolk Downs, Widett Circle, and Parcel 3 in Roxbury. The City must build on earlier investments, allocating \$300 million of affordable housing subsidy and linkage to fully develop projects in communities of color that benefit Black and brown people. There must also be dedicated senior LGBTQIA housing and housing/work space for artists in communities of color.

Banks and lending institutions must also be held accountable for investing in local residential and commercial development, and social and cultural institutions with the implementation of the Boston Investment Act. The City must invest more in affordable homeownership, including the ONE Plus Boston Mortgage Program, and should prioritize communities of color that were impacted by redlining for homeownership opportunities and rental subsidies.

Structural racism and discriminatory policies created a quarter million dollar wealth gap between white and Black households in Boston. There is an opportunity to disrupt the cycle of generational poverty and create community wealth. The Massachusetts Competitive Partnership, the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, the New England Council, the New England Venture Capital Association, Life Science and Pharma Companies, and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce should be convened to request that they spend \$1 Billion dollars with Black businesses annually. The City should invest \$5 million in a Small Business Relief Fund for businesses owned by people of color. The City should also invest in BECMA's Greenwood Challenge for the Black business relief program and publish a directory of Black businesses in Boston.

As the lead sponsor of the Equitable Regulation of Cannabis Ordinance, I'm proud of the work that we did together to create more opportunities, especially for those impacted by the war on drugs, but much more work remains. The zoning code continues to be a barrier to equity applicants and must be amended. The City must create an Equity Empowerment Zone to ensure that businesses owned by people of color can open and thrive in high revenue generating areas like Downtown, Fenway, and the Seaport. There must be a faster, more transparent process for approving HCAs with a focus on racial equity. The City should offer specialized technical assistance and support to equity applicants and there must be a plan to minimize the financial burden for applicants, by considering the sequencing of the application process and when site control is required. Currently, site control is the first step, adding an additional burden on businesses owned by people of color. The Mayor should also lift the 5 year/\$5million cap on the Boston Equity Fund and amend the Executive Order prohibiting City employees and their relatives to participate in the Cannabis Industry in Boston.

Ensuring that there is equity in contracting is an absolute necessity in a "majority-minority" city with nearly 55% of our residents identifying as non-white. The City should commit to a minimum goal of 20% for MBEs and must adopt equity standards and implement accountability measures for each city department and hold them accountable for meeting such standards. The City should commit \$1 Billion dollars in new city procurement to Black owned businesses. The City should build capacity to support the Equitable Procurement and Supplier Diversity initiative and larger contracts should be divided into smaller contracts, so that small businesses owned by people of color can participate. The Massport Model should be adopted in all government contracting and real estate destinations. Criteria must include a minimum 25% grading for diversity of ownership of the development team.

Boston Public Schools must eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps in our education system. Disparities have grown even wider in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating systemic inequities. BPS must implement the Opportunity & Achievement Gap Policy adopted by the Boston School Committee in 2016, which calls for revising the exam school admissions' policy to increase diversity, decolonizing the curricula, expanding dual language opportunities, and increasing teacher diversity. Learning aids must be accurate and culturally sensitive, which requires removing the outdated Mercator Projection Map, which inflates the Western world's physical size and cultural significance, from every classroom, and replacing it with the geographically accurate and proportional Gall-Peters Projection map, which BPS introduced in 2017. BPS must be intentional in implementing social emotional learning and restorative justice practices to dismantle the prison pipeline, including repurposing school police officers as counselors and social workers to provide wrap around support to students that need it the most.

We must invest in our youth as the future of our workforce by revising the funding formula and admissions policy for Madison Park Technical Vocational High School. A critical step in closing the enormous achievement gap is addressing racism in our special education system that leaves Black and Brown children substantially separated, especially boys. Additionally, BPS youth must have more voice in decision making processes that impact their education. The City must prioritize adding youth voting members on the Boston School Committee and lowering the voting age to 16 in municipal elections. The City of Boston should increase city funding for SuccessLink youth jobs, so that there are an additional 5000 summer jobs and 1000 year round jobs. Further, SuccessLink should be expanded to include 14-22 year olds and undocumented youth to ensure that young people get access to economic opportunities and the chance to build a career pathway.

Racism is a public health crisis and it impacts every aspect of our society. There must be financial investment in order to eradicate negative health impacts. Access to recovery services must be equitable, not clustered in 1-2 neighbor-

hoods. The climate crisis also impacts poor communities of color the hardest. The high rates of asthma in Black children can be traced to decades of environmental injustices. Communities of color continue to be disproportionately impacted by pollution and environmental degradation.

To repair the harm and ensure that communities of color can live healthy, safe, productive lives, Boston must commit to adopting net zero carbon building requirements and major investments in the upkeep of parks and green spaces in communities of color, with access to fresh, healthy food, and community gardens. More must be done to address food insecurity and environmental resiliency in Boston's Black and Brown communities. The City should commit to hiring arborists of color and support the transition to electric buses, beginning in communities of color.

Black people spend 64 more hours commuting because of unreliable buses and lack of access to rapid transit, conditions created and exacerbated by racism. Creating a fund for free buses in poor Black and Brown communities is a must. The MBTA is the primary means of transportation for poor communities of color. Eliminating bus fare will alleviate the significant financial burden for Black and Brown working class families. Increasing investments in pedestrian safety and incorporating multi-modal transportation will help ensure transit access and equity, especially in poor communities of color.

The City must change how it promotes Boston on all tourist and welcome center websites and in printed materials to be much more reflective of Boston's rich diversity. It is not enough to feature a "diversity" page or section. Boston's diversity must be accurately reflected in all promotional materials. Cultural institutions should also be held accountable for ensuring greater opportunities for Black artists and greater access to Boston's cultural institutions.

Diversity must be reflected in every level of government, including cabinet chiefs, boards, and commissions. We are calling for executive leadership to include a minimum of 40% from the Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian communities. The lack of Latinx representation has been a long-standing issue and must be prioritized. Further, recognizing that the Latinx community has also been impacted by the U.S. Government's war on drugs, the Boston Cannabis Board should have representation from that community. Given the urgency of many of the issues highlighted in this letter, a Civilian Review Board (already mentioned) with subpoena power and a Human Rights Commission that hears discrimination cases should both be operational by September 2020. Racism is insidious and often can often go unseen by those who don't experience it. The City should also create a Racial Justice Task Force to assess the racial equity impact of all City of Boston policies, procedures, regulations, legislation, and executive orders.

Every resident, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, or immigration status deserves to feel safe and welcomed in our city. The City must make it clear that it values Black lives, not only through Black Lives Matter Banner hung on City Hall, Black Lives Matter street mural on Washington St in Nubian Square, and a Juneteenth holiday, but with meaningful policy changes. Boston must create and codify into law sanctuary spaces, expand on the language access ordinance with regular reports to the Council, and require racial equity and anti-racist training for all City employees. There must be greater access to voting. Together, we must demand changes that expand access, like early voting, voting rights for immigrants and youths, an election day holiday. A number of initiatives must be advanced to ensure greater access, participation, and transparency, including: simultaneous translation of all City correspondence and interpretation, with paid translator and interpreter positions to be administered by the Office of Language and Communications Access, as well as city-provided childcare for public meetings. Discrimination faced by Boston's LGBTQIA+ community is often magnified for LGBTQIA+ members of color. One step the City must take to repair the harm of homophobic policies and end inequities in healthcare is increased advocacy for LGBTQIA+ people to donate blood.

There is no question that this work will require significant investment. It is time to demand more of our non-profit partners and enter into a new PILOT agreement. The City can begin by implementing recommendations of the Boston PILOT Task Force highlighted in the report "*Boston Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program: A Fair Deal For Boston Residents.*" The City must prioritize assessing the institutions' actual property value. By not updating the valuations and determining the real value of these institutions, Boston is losing out on revenue that could be invested in our schools, roads, and small businesses. The City should also require approval before taxable property can be purchased by tax-

exempt organizations. This limits the loss of taxable land and revenue. The City must adopt a more robust and transparent community process, especially in determining community benefits.

A Black and Brown Agenda for Boston is about more than just rhetoric, it is about the lives of Black and Brown Bostonians - the value of which is not up for debate. At this time in our nation's history, we need swift, decisive and comprehensive action. My colleagues and I have worked tirelessly over the past few weeks (and years, quite frankly) to construct an agenda that takes meaningful steps to uplift communities of color and repair the harm of centuries of both *de jure* and *de facto* racism. We cannot actualize all of these demands on our own. We stand in solidarity with those we serve and we respectfully request your response by the end of business on Monday June 22nd. Thank you.

Respectfully and urgently submitted,

Council President Kim Janey, District 7
Councilor Ricardo Arroyo, District 5
Councilor Kenzie Bok, District 8
Councilor Liz Breadon, District 9
Councilor Andrea Campbell, District 4
Councilor Lydia Edwards, District 1
Councilor Julia Mejia, At-Large
Councilor Michelle Wu, At-Large

Register of Probate Felix D. Arroyo, Suffolk County
State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, 2nd Suffolk
State Representative Nika Elugardo, 15th Suffolk
State Representative Russell Holmes, 6th Suffolk
State Representative Liz Miranda, 5th Suffolk
State Representative Jon Santiago, 9th Suffolk

Activated Massachusetts African Community
Alternatives for Community and Environment
Amplify Latinx
Black Directors Network
Black Economic Council of Massachusetts
Black Economic Justice Institute
Black Market Nubian
Black and Pink, Boston
Boston Black COVID-19 Coalition
Boston Black Hospitality Coalition
Boston Jobs Coalition
Boston Network for Black Student Achievement
Boston Society of Vulcans
Boston Ujima Project
Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association
Jamaica Plain Progressives
Lawyers for Civil Rights
Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement
MassVOTE
Minority Developers Association
Multicultural AIDS Coalition
PILOT Action Group
Progressive West Roxbury/Roslindale
Reclaim Roxbury

As part of the overwhelmingly positive response after this letter's initial sending, the undersigned here have signed on their names after June 19th:

Rev. Willie Bodrick, II
Rev. Art Gordon
Rev. Ricky Grant

American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts
Bikes Not Bombs
Black Teachers Matter, Inc.
Boston Cyclists Union
Chinese Progressive Association
Equitable Opportunities NOW
GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders
NAACP UMass Boston College Chapter
New D.I.A.
Student Immigrant Movement
Young Democrats of Massachusetts Latino Caucus