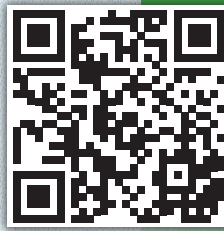




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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023

FREE

# CHARLESTOWN

PATRIOT-BRIDGE

## MASS BOOK AWARDS

## CNC Special Election Feb. 4



Special to the Patriot-Bridge

The Charlestown Neighborhood Council Special Election to fill several seats will take place in-person on Saturday, February 4, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Boston Police Station, Community Room, 20 Vine St., Hayes Square, Charlestown. Updates about the election or election date, if any, will be posted on the CNC website and social media accounts. [www.cnc02129.org](http://www.cnc02129.org)

the past since we had the precinct "relocation" and are now voting for at-large candidates as well as new precinct candidates. Most importantly though, we have a very impressive slate of candidates running for office and we should all be proud that so many of our community members have stepped forward and do care and want to be involved." said Barbara Van Duzer Babin, Election Committee Chair.

There will be ballots available

"This is a rather complicated election compared to all those in

(CNC Pg. 4)

## Coletta requesting hearing on loss of rehearsal space

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

District 1 Councillor Gabriela Coletta joined with fellow District 9 Councillor Liz Breadon in sponsoring an order requesting a hearing before the council to discuss the loss of rehearsal space for musicians.

questioning where they will be able to practice.

Solutions have been provided to those who used the Brighton facility, there are no solutions by those impacted by additional evictions from rehearsal space according to the Councillors.

Invited to attend the hearing are the Office of Arts and Culture, the Arts Stays Here Coalition, stakeholders and the public.

The hearing has not yet been scheduled.

The recent closing of the Sound Museum in Brighton and possible closing of the Charlestown Rehearsal Studios on Terminal Street have many local artists

## CNC CORNER

**Annual Meeting:** The Charlestown Neighborhood Council will hold a public, in person meeting on Tuesday February 7, 2023 at 7 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus, 545 Medford Street, Charlestown. This is our annual meeting. The newly elected council members will be seated at the meeting and the council members will then elect the 2023 officers. We will also discuss the council's 2023 priorities. All Charlestown residents are encouraged to attend. Please send questions, matters of concern, or priorities for the coming year via email to [cnc02129@gmail.com](mailto:cnc02129@gmail.com).

**Special Election:** The Charlestown Neighborhood Council will hold a special election on Saturday, February 4, 2023. Voting

(CORNER Pg. 4)

## Wu sets ambitious agenda in State of the City Address

By Stephen Quigley

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu delivered her State of the City Address at the MGM Music Hall next door to Fenway Park last week in which the mayor noted the achievements that have been accomplished over the past year and outlined a vision for making Boston a greener and more affordable city in which to live and work by 2030.

"The state of the city is strong," said Wu adding, "We have the resources, the resolve, and responsibility to make it even stronger."

Wu praised city employees for making "every accomplishment and constituent service delivered,

See page 7 for Mayor Wu's complete speech.

every detail of the agenda we're sharing here tonight — this is only possible because of you.

"Our cabinet is two-thirds people of color," Wu noted. She singled out Boston natives Boston Police Commissioner Michael Cox; Trinh Nguyen, the Chief of Worker Empowerment; and Segun Idowu, Chief of Economic Opportunity and Development, for their commitment to Boston's residents.

"Three bus lines are entirely fare free," said Wu, "and now we are accelerating over two dozen, new, dedicated bus lanes, expanding our bike network, and organizing even more neighborhood Open Streets events."

The mayor highlighted that public safety will be important, noting that 900 guns were taken off the streets and that violent and property crime are at the lowest levels in 15 years.



MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY ISABEL LEON

Mayor Michelle Wu delivers remarks during the 2023 State of the City Address at the MGM Music Hall.

Bringing welcome news to many neighborhood residents who have bitterly complained about the indifference of the Boston Plan-

(WU Pg. 3)

# EDITORIAL

## GET READY FOR THE COLD!

We may have just finished what reportedly ranks as the fifth-warmest January on record, but by the end of this week, we'll be experiencing our coldest weather in seven years when an Arctic blast dips into the United States and delivers temperatures that will start to plummet during the day on Friday and extend through Sunday morning.

The weatherman is telling us that the temp will be at six below zero in the Boston area when we wake up Saturday morning and will reach no higher than 15 throughout the entire day.

In addition, the Arctic blast will be riding a northwest wind of 20-30 miles per hour, bringing the dreaded wind chill factor into the range of -20 or lower.

For those of us who live along the coastline, we will be treated to the eerie spectre of "sea smoke," the water vapor that forms when really cold air moves over the relatively warmer water (which presently is at a temperature of about 40 degrees in Boston Harbor).

Fortunately, this cold snap will be gone in a snap -- less than 48 hours -- with the temperatures getting back to more-seasonable levels by Sunday when the wind direction shifts from the northwest to the southwest.

Needless to say, outdoor activity of just about any kind will be impossible during the day on Saturday. While that may be a minor inconvenience for most of us, for those who are homeless, the extreme cold will be deadly, particularly for the recently-homeless who have not experienced weather this cold.

We trust that local officials and charitable organizations will do their best to get the homeless off the streets and into warming shelters during this life-threatening period.

As for the rest of us (who can turn our TV onto some golf tournament in California or Hawaii for a vicarious experience), we should make sure that all windows and storm windows are shut tight throughout our homes to ensure that cold air does not infiltrate, with the potential to cause freezing pipes. It also is smart to make sure that our thermostats are kept high enough to ensure that outside walls that have water or heating lines (and that may not be fully-insulated) are kept warm enough to prevent freeze-ups. We realize that this will increase our heating bills -- but that will be far cheaper than repairing the damage from a frozen pipe that bursts.

Ol' Man Winter has been kind to us up to now -- but this weekend he'll be letting us know that we should not take him for granted.

## HEALTH CARE FOR ALL IS A PUBLIC GOOD

We were pleased to see that Chelsea's newly-elected State Representative, Judith Garcia, announced last week that she has co-sponsored An Act to Advance Health Equity, a bill that aims to close the gap in healthcare by prioritizing equity in state government, regulating data reporting on health equity, and improving access to and the quality of healthcare for historically-disadvantaged communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought into stark contrast the disparity in outcomes between those in our society who have good health care options vs. those who do not. The COVID-19 death rates in poorer communities far exceeded those in wealthier communities (which is typical for just about every disease and illness known to man).

Based on a data analysis of more than 3,000 counties across the US, Americans in poorer counties died at almost twice the rate of those in wealthier counties at the start of the pandemic. That dichotomy became even more pronounced in the later waves of the pandemic, when death rates in economically-disadvantaged counties were three and four times the rates of more-affluent counties.

But those of us who are fortunate enough to have access to healthcare should not be deluded into thinking that this is "someone else's" problem. The COVID-19 pandemic proved conclusively that what happens anywhere can have serious implications everywhere.

Communicable diseases are "communicable" because they spread and, as we learned from COVID-19, viruses do not discriminate between rich and poor. Persons in wealthier communities overall may have had better outcomes because of better access to healthcare, but when viruses spread rapidly through communities without good healthcare options, it is inevitable that all of us are affected (and infected).

The simple point we're trying to make is that in our interconnected world in which we rely on each other for everything, it is to the advantage of everyone to make sure that every member of our society has access to quality healthcare.

This is both a moral imperative and a common-sense goal that benefits every member of society.

We applaud Rep. Garcia for sponsoring this bill and we urge the legislature to pass it forthwith.

## GUEST OP-ED

### Classified document stink piles

Dr. Glenn Mollette

An Old Testament story records an overwhelming infestation of frogs throughout Egypt. There was no place in Egypt where frogs were not present in large numbers. The plague was sent in response to Pharaoh's attitude toward the Israelite people who lived in slavery under his rule. When God ended the plague there were piles of dead frogs all over Egypt. In the streets, bedrooms, bathrooms, closets, storage facilities, and places we can only imagine. It became a very stinky situation as they raked up the dead frogs and piled them up all over Egypt.

The Classified Document saga seems to be growing in similar fashion to the dead frogs of Egypt. They appear to be everywhere and they stink. The odor has to be particularly bad for Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden as well as Vice President Mike Pence.

First came the big raid of Trump's home in Florida. Late at night, FBI agents went through his home and personal items and carried out boxes of documents. Next, we hear that Biden has had classified documents in his home for years. They seem to be scattered everywhere throughout his house. Then, Mike Pence in Indiana has more classified docu-

ments. What are these men doing with these documents? They are scattered out like the dead frogs of Egypt.

Again, what are these individuals doing with classified documents? I used to keep a big box of comic books when I was a kid. I would read a comic and then put it in the box. Sometimes I would read them again. I definitely knew that I had them. Why would past administrations hold on to classified documents? How did they get to the locations where they were found?

The National Archives has asked all the former Presidents to check for classified documents. Jimmy Carter? Where would he have them? In his family Bible? Mixed in with old Sunday school lessons that he has taught at the local Baptist Church? I don't think so but you never know who might have picked them up, packed them in a box, and placed them on a shelf in his garage. What about George W. Bush? Could documents be under the seat of his old truck? Bill Clinton has emphatically stated he does not have any classified documents but he has made emphatic statements before. These former Presidents have said they do not have such documents.

Did Trump carry these documents out of the White House

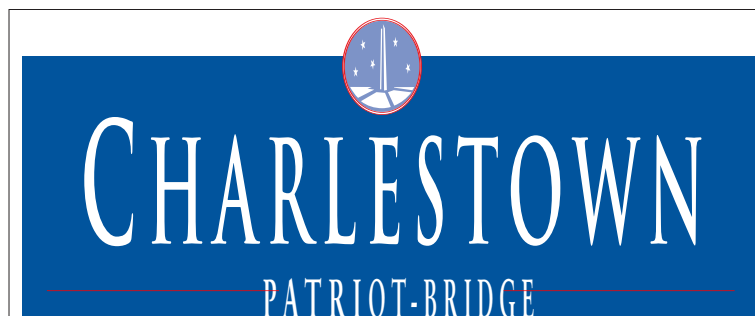
when he and his family climbed aboard the Presidential helicopter? I've never seen Trump or Biden carry anything. Which aid picked up some boxes and tossed them into the moving van? Where is White House security when it comes to classified documents?

Only time will tell and we may never know for sure about the plethora of classified documents. We hope they aren't reading some of them in China or Russia. Who can say for sure where they are not being read? We do not know for sure whether or not someone else has them. Could another family member have a box or two somewhere? How much money would China, Russia or others pay for classified documents?

Democrats and Republicans will point fingers and scream about all this in the next election. Both sides will try to make the other side look worse but it appears there is plenty of stink everywhere.

*Glenn Mollette is the publisher of Newburgh Press, Liberty Torch and various other publishing imprints; a national columnist - American Issues and Common Sense opinions, analysis, stories and features appear each week in over 500 newspapers, websites and blogs across the United States.*

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## NEWS BRIEFS

### KNIGHTS FUNDRAISER, FEBRUARY 25

Get your tickets now for a night featuring Master Hypnotist Joe DeVito at the Knights of Columbus #62, Medford St. Saturday, February 25th, doors are at 7PM. There will be some local comedy and a DJ as well as the mesmerizing show from DeVito. Tickets are \$25 each or get a table with your friends for \$200. Support the Knights in Town and have a great night.

### FREE APPLE DEVICES CLASSES FOR SENIORS - CHANGE OF DATES

Steadfast Solutions will be holding 3 classes on iPhones and iPads on February 27, March 6 +13th. All seniors are welcome to attend at The Golden Age Center to learn how to use your tech. If you own

an Apple device please bring it to class. The classes will be progressive, so please plan to attend all 3. There will also be one-on-one sessions available before and after classes. The Golden Age Center is located at 382 Main Street in Charlestown, please contact Director Meaghan Murray 617-635-5175 if you have questions.

### SCHOOL SUPPLY GIVEAWAY

All BPS teachers, students and parents are invited to the Local Seven Ironworkers 3rd Annual School Supply Giveaway with all the essential supplies needed to finish the 2023 school year off strong! They will be giving away school supplies for ALL grades K-12 at 195 Old Colony Ave., South Boston on February 25th 2023, 11a.m.-2p.m.

Any questions about the Event please email [thenextcommittee7@gmail.com](mailto:thenextcommittee7@gmail.com).

### WU (from pg. 1)

ning and Redevelopment Agency, Wu called for “charting a new course for growth, with people as our compass. Tomorrow, I’ll sign an executive order establishing a Planning Advisory Council to fully integrate long-range planning, and begin modernizing our zoning code.”

Wu noted that she aims to “sustainably” increase the population of Boston from its current number of 675,000 to 800,000.

Affordable housing also figured in her goals. Wu said that more than 3,800 housing units were permitted, including 1,300 affordable units.

Wu said “every square foot of city-owned property” has been analyzed “and we have identified several parcels that could be used for affordable housing units.”

If “local builders work with us to design high-quality, affordable homes that enhance the surrounding neighborhood, we will give

you the land for free. And we will provide increased mortgage assistance so our residents can afford to buy these homes,” said the mayor.

Wu set a goal of 2030 to have the city’s public housing developments become fossil fuel-free.

“Our neighborhoods must be climate resilient and community-focused. This year we will launch a civic space master plan,” said the mayor.

Wu also offered some examples “of the things we’re doing right now to strengthen our schools, support our teachers, and do right by our students.”

She pointed out the brand new Boston Arts Academy in the Fenway, and the resurrection of the decade-old plan for the Josiah Quincy Upper School in Chinatown to become the city’s next state-of-the-art high school.

“This project was kicked off in 2012: three mayors and six superintendents ago. Students in the

first grade when this project started will have graduated from high school by the time it is finished,” said Wu.

She pointed out the early college and innovation pathways at five high schools and the partnership with UMass Boston that will provide real-life work experiences and offer college-level courses in finance, healthcare, and biotech.

Wu closed her speech saying, “Boston is a city that will never stop reaching — up toward the progress we know to be possible, and out to the community whose work makes it lasting.”

District 1 City Councillor Gabriela “Gig” Coletta enthusiastically applauded Wu’s vision.

“Boston has accomplished so much in the last year and I cannot wait to see all we accomplish in this year,” said Coletta. “I look forward to working with Mayor Wu on housing, climate resiliency, and mobility.”

# JOHANNA HYNES

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CORNER (from pg. 1)

will be in-person from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Boston Police station at 20 Vine St., Hayes Square, Charlestown, MA. Four (4) open seats will be on the ballot: two (2) at-large seats and two (2) precinct seats, one in each of Precincts 6 and 8. Three (3) seats will not be on the ballot: the candidates in Precincts 3 & 4 are uncontested and no nominations were submitted for Precinct 7. All Charlestown residents age 18 or older are eligible to vote in the at-large election. Residents of pre-

cincts 6 or 8 who are 18 or older may also vote for one candidate in the election for the precinct in which they reside. No proxy or absentee voting. Residents may vote in the special election regardless of their voter registration status. If you are not a registered voter, please bring an ID with your residential address. For more information on the candidates and the election, please see the article in today's paper and [cnc02129.org/elections](https://www.cnc02129.org/elections).

CNC (from pg. 1)

on election day for the three contested elections: At-large, Precinct 6, and Precinct 8. No voting is required for Precincts 3 and 4 since each had one uncontested candidate who will be seated as council members at the February 7, 2023 general council meeting. No nominations were submitted for Precinct 7.

Any current Charlestown resident who is 18 years or older is eligible to vote in the Special Election. Eligible residents may cast a ballot in a precinct election only if they live in that precinct; however, all eligible residents may cast a ballot in the at-large election. Residents who are not registered to vote must bring a picture id with their Charlestown

address on it. No proxy or absentee votes will be accepted.

The candidates for each open seat are listed below. Candidates were invited, but not required, to introduce themselves to the Charlestown community by providing a photo and candidate statement for the Council's webpage. Information about the candidates can be found at <https://www.cnc02129.org/elections>

At-Large:

- Crystal Galvin, 58 13th St, Unit 155
- Johanna Hynes, 26 High St.
- Pippa Nava, 4 Salem Street Avenue
- Kelly Tucker, 16 Tibbettstown Way
- Tom Ward, 37 Bartlett St.

- Jean Wilson, 11 Sullivan St. #2

Precinct 3:

- John (Jay) Driscoll, 18 Harvard St. Unit #1

Precinct 4:

- Ameeth Deenanath, 8 Lexington St. #2

Precinct 6:

- Philip Cappadona, 29 N. Mead St.

Precinct 8:


- Kelli Gillen Forbes, 8 Saint Martin St.
- Ross Wilson, 31A Belmont St.

Precinct 8:

- Mary Catherine Boucher, 47D Old Landing Way
- Betty Carrington, 129 Bunker Hill St. #1003

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CHARLESTOWN BEAT

COMMUNITY ROOM: The 2nd floor Community Room at 20 Vine St. is available to neighborhood groups for meetings.

Please call Christine Vraibel at 617-343-4627 or email [christine.vraibel@pd.boston.gov](mailto:christine.vraibel@pd.boston.gov) to reserve.

POLICE RELATED INFO: Contact the District A-1 Community Service Office at 617-343-4627.

Identity Fraud

01/23/2023 – At about 6:54 p.m., a victim came into District A-15 headquarters to file a report for identity theft.

The victim said before Dec. 13, unknown suspect(s) opened four accounts with Verizon in the victim's name, generating a bill for \$608:68. The victim also stated he has no account with Verizon and has no knowledge of the transaction.

Additionally, the victim said on Dec. 16, unknown person(s) made

a \$10 payment to the account. The victim could not give an accurate date and time of the incident but was advised to cancel all of the aforementioned accounts with Verizon.

Larceny - Theft from a Vehicle

01/29/2023 – At approximately 1:22 p.m., an officer took a walk-in report from a victim, who stated they had parked their 2022 Gray Honda on their street at 10 Albion Place. The vehicle's doors

were unlocked. There were no signs of a break, nor any damage done to the car.

Two missing items were stolen from the vehicle: face masks from the glove compartment; and a pair of brown Leather J. Crew gloves, valued at \$100. Inside the car, the suspect(s) left behind trash, including an open and empty Amazon package addressed to Baldwin Street in Charlestown.

Area A-1 Detectives were scheduled to conduct a follow-up investigation.

Real Estate Transfers

BUYER 1	SELLER 1	ADDRESS	PRICE
Oleary, Kevin G	Martin, Tyler N	42 8th St #1513	\$572,000
Beneduce, Lauren	Murphy, Sarah E	42 Pleasant St #3	\$769,000
Murphy, Sarah	Norton, Benjamin	79 Green St	\$962,500

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# DiDomenico launches campaign to lift kids out of deep poverty

Special to the Patriot-Bridge

Senator Sal DiDomenico with his colleague Representative Marjorie Decker and the Lift Our Kids Coalition have accelerated the timetable for lifting kids out of Deep Poverty by filing Senate and House bills (SD 501, HD 507) at the start of the 2023-2024 legislative session. A campaign launch event was held last week to build support for this legislation and introduce it to members of the Legislature. The Act to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty, which Senator DiDomenico has led on for years, would raise the maximum cash assistance grant by 25% a year until it reaches half of the federal poverty level. Families living below half the pov-



Rep. Marjorie Decker and Sen. Sal DiDomenico.

erty level are considered to be in Deep Poverty. Under the bill, grants would increase each year and would keep pace with inflation as the poverty level goes up. After decades of frozen cash assistance levels, Senator DiDomenico and Representative

Decker led the charge in the Legislature to raise grants three times for a total increase of 32% beginning in January 2021. This was a huge step forward for families in our communities and they are looking to continue building on this momentum.

“It is simply unacceptable that we have nearly 70,000 children in the Commonwealth living so far below the federal poverty level,” said Senator DiDomenico, the lead sponsor of the Senate bill and Assistant Majority Leader of the Massachusetts Senate. “While the recent increases in cash assistance were an important step towards helping our families, I am committed to continuing our work and pushing for further bold action to ensure that no child lives in Deep Poverty, suffering without

nutritious food, winter clothing or basic needs such as diapers. We live in one of the wealthiest states in the nation and there is no excuse for children living in poverty. Now more than ever, we must make this bill one of the highest priorities for the legislative session.”

The Lift Our Kids Coalition (liftourkidsma.org), comprised of 155 organizations, formed in late 2016 to advocate for repeal of the welfare family cap, the law that barred benefits for children conceived while the family received assistance. DiDomenico and Decker led the repeal of the family cap in 2019, and the Legislature overrode the Governor’s veto of repeal by an almost unanimous vote.



Among the attendees are (front row left to right) Rep. Shirley Arriaga, Rep. Rita Mendes, Sen. Sal DiDomenico, Rep. Judith Garcia and Sen. Robyn Kennedy.

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# Moms Art Night



**MON | FEB 6 | 7:30PM**

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You **WILL** Have a Great time!

# Wu leads the 43rd annual homelessness census

Special to the Patriot-B ridge

With record setting cold weather approaching this weekend, Mayor Michelle Wu on Tuesday night led a group of volunteers, including U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development officials, City officials, State officials, homelessness services providers, and public health and first responders, in conducting the City of Boston's 43rd annual homelessness census. The street count is part of the City's comprehensive yearly census of unsheltered adults, youth, and families in emergency shelters, transitional housing, domestic violence programs, as well as individuals living outside. The census helps inform the City of Boston's policy development and allocation of resources for households experiencing homelessness.

"Boston's annual homelessness census is an opportunity to assess the need for housing across our neighborhoods and move us closer to ensuring that every resident has a safe, healthy, affordable place to call home," said Mayor Michelle Wu. "Last night's Census is critical to ensuring that the City moves with urgency and care as we work to improve the lives of our residents and build a Boston for everyone. I am grateful for our state and federal partners and our volunteers across the city for working with us to safely undertake this year's count and who made this year's census possible. With this important data, we'll continue taking action to tackle our housing crisis across city departments and ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-repeating in Boston."

This year, more than 200 volunteers canvassed 45 areas after midnight, covering every city neighborhood, Logan Airport, and the transit and parks systems. Volunteers canvassed assigned areas, identified those sleeping on the street,

conducted a short survey, and provided individuals with important safety information and items to help keep warm. The surveys will be closely analyzed to ensure accuracy, and then cross-checked and combined with the results of a shelter count. The annual homelessness census required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a key component in Boston receiving more than \$38 million in federal grant funding for housing and services for households experiencing homelessness in Boston.

"Every year, cities and towns across America are required by HUD to do their Point-in-Time count, an assessment of homelessness on one night in January," said Richard Cho, HUD Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Housing and Services. "But this is about more than numbers – it is an opportunity to come together to understand that behind each data point is a human being who is struggling to survive and ultimately find their way back home. I applaud Mayor Wu and the City of Boston for their commitment to this issue and their continuous work to find solutions to the most pressing housing needs for their citizens."

In 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) launched House America, a new federal initiative that invited mayors, city and county leaders, tribal nation leaders, and governors into a national partnership. House America made investments provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address the crisis of homelessness through a "housing-first" approach. As part of the House America initiative, the City of Boston committed to rehouse 1,100 households experiencing homelessness and build over 650 units of housing for people facing housing insecurity by the end of 2022. The City exceeded

the goals set by HUD by housing 1,161 individuals and creating 739 units of housing.

"The homeless census brings together government, non-profit organizations and community volunteers to understand the needs of our unsheltered neighbors and to renew commitments to solve this critical issue," said Sheila Dillon, Chief of Housing. "The City remains committed to ending homelessness through the creation of permanent supportive housing, providing services that assist our most vulnerable residents and tracking our progress. Boston has the lowest number of unsheltered individuals in the country, but even one person on the street is one too many."

The City of Boston and its partners continue to work to end chronic and veteran homelessness using the Housing First approach, an evidence-based approach to ending homelessness that uses principles such as the philosophies that everyone is "housing ready" and everyone deserves permanent and stable housing without preconditions like sobriety or treatment. City agencies and community partners have dramatically redesigned the way services are delivered to homeless individuals, increasing resources devoted to housing and deploying new technologies to match homeless individuals with housing and services.

"The annual census is an important tool that shows our progress toward ending homelessness in Boston," said Lyndia Downie, President and Executive Director, Pine Street Inn. "We are proud that Boston's street numbers are very low, especially in comparison to many cities across the country. However, as long as there is anyone on the street or in shelter, our work is not done. We must continue to focus on strategies to move vulnerable individuals off the street, out



Richard Cho, HUD Senior Advisor to the Secretary for Housing and Services talks to the group conducting the census as Mayor Michelle Wu looks on.

of shelter, and into the safety and stability of permanent housing."

In September 2022, the City of Boston submitted a grant proposal of \$41 million to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support Boston's homelessness programs in 2024, through HUD's McKinney Homeless Continuum of Care program.

"Homelessness is a public health crisis that significantly increases the risk of poor health outcomes," said Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, Commissioner of Public Health and Executive Director of the Boston Public Health Commission. "The Boston Public Health Commission will continue to work with Mayor Wu and the City of Boston to improve access to housing and provide critical wraparound services to support the health and wellbeing of our residents who are experiencing homelessness or housing instability."

In June 2022, Mayor Wu announced that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Boston on the night of the census decreased by 2.4 percent, from 1,659 individuals in 2021 to 1,545 individuals in 2022. This reduction builds on a decrease of 24.7 percent from 2020 to 2021,

which was due in part to a coordinated effort by city agencies and homeless service providers to create alternative housing, shelter, and healthcare options that concentrated shelters during the first wave of the pandemic. It also reflects sustained and successful efforts in housing individuals experiencing homelessness and at-risk individuals, and diverting individuals from emergency shelter to safe alternatives when possible. Additionally, in 2022, with the support of many City agencies and partner organizations, more than 470 individuals formerly living unsheltered in the Mass/Cass area have been connected with low-threshold, supportive housing.

The results from this year's homeless census will be available in the coming months.

The Mayor's Office of Housing is responsible for housing people experiencing homelessness, creating and preserving affordable housing, and ensuring that renters and homeowners can obtain, maintain, and remain in safe, stable housing. The department develops and implements the City of Boston's housing creation and homelessness prevention plans and collaborates with local and national partners to find new solutions and build more housing affordable to all, particularly those with lower incomes. For more information, please visit the MOH website.

The Boston Public Health Commission, the country's oldest health department, is an independent public agency providing a wide range of health services and programs. It is governed by a seven-member board of health appointed by the Mayor of Boston. The mission of the Boston Public Health Commission is to protect, preserve, and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, particularly the most vulnerable. For more information, please visit [www.bphc.org](http://www.bphc.org).



Lyndia Downie, President and Executive Director, Pine Street Inn helps with the homeless census.



Mayor Michelle Wu (right) talks with a homeless person during the annual homelessness census.

# Mayor Wu's State of the City Address

Mayor Wu delivered her first State of the City Address on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, at MGM Music Hall. The following is her speech:

Good evening, Boston! Tonight we're at the beautiful new MGM Music Hall, and I want to thank the Red Sox and Fenway Music Company for hosting us, and for your commitment to our city.

I'm grateful to be joined by partners in public service: Council President Flynn and Boston City Councilors, Chair Robinson and the Boston School Committee, Mayor Janey, Ambassador Flynn and Mrs. Flynn, Governor Healey, Senate President Spilka, Attorney General Campbell, Treasurer Goldberg, State Representatives and Senators, US Attorney Rollins, county officials. Thank you so much for being with us. And to our interpreters, thank you for helping us reach all of our residents this evening, in seven languages.

A year ago this week, I was bundled up for my first snowstorm as mayor, riding shotgun with our Superintendent of Streets, Mike Brohel, as he drove the dark, icy roads before dawn, and worked with his team to salt, scrape, and win back the pavement from the snow. By the time we got to City Hall, Al Vilar was already hunkered down in the Traffic Management Center, lunch packed for a long storm, monitoring eight gigantic screens for anyone who might need help on the roads. As the rest of our city slept, Boston's 311 and 911 call-takers answered phones throughout the night, to send services where needed, while emergency management crews, EMS, police, and fire stood ready.

Our city is carried by so many people whose faces most of us never see. Who aren't on the news, or on stage accepting awards, but after a full day of serving our constituents, still find time to coach softball at Charlestown High Field or pack meals for new immigrant families in Mattapan Square.

That's why, on your way in tonight, you saw the beautiful portraits of just a few of these civic heroes. To all our City Workers: Every accomplishment and constituent service delivered, every detail of the agenda we're sharing here tonight—is only possible because of you. I'm so proud to work alongside you.

It's been three years since we've been able to celebrate—and reflect on—the State of our City in person. And we've all felt the collective toll of these years and the continued impact on our hearts and minds, on local businesses and

household budgets.

Boston has always been resilient.

But when resilience goes from a strength that we call on, to a constant state of being, it's time to stop hardening ourselves against the world, and start changing the world we live in.

Real change comes from community, so I knew my first and most important job as mayor was to build the team Boston deserves. That team is here tonight. Our Cabinet is two-thirds people of color! We're BPS parents, and graduates. We speak Spanish and Arabic, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, and more. We speak honestly about Boston's past, present, and future, because we've lived the challenges and shared the dreams of the families we now get to serve.

The young man who started as a lifeguard in our community centers, now oversees them as our Chief of Human Services: José Massó.

The school lunch lady's daughter, who found her calling as a teacher, then launched a nationally recognized high school in Dorchester, is now our Boston Public Schools Superintendent: Mary Skipper.

The boy from Roxbury who wanted to serve and protect, who—against all odds, and over nearly three decades—rose through every level of leadership at the Boston Police Department, is now our Boston Police Commissioner: Michael Cox.

The girl who watched her refugee parents wash dishes at restaurants so their kids could lead a better life—now leads our efforts to ensure that all workers, no matter where they were born or what language they speak, have health, safety, and dignity on the job, as our new Chief of Worker Empowerment: Trinh Nguyen.

The toddler who took his very first steps in City Hall daycare, grew up to hold city leaders accountable for vast racial disparities in city contracting as President and CEO of the Black Economic Council of MA, and is now our Chief of Economic Opportunity & Inclusion: Segun Idowu.

Just like our communities, this team refuses to accept that things must be how they've always been. We're taking on the hard, complicated issues our residents face, no matter how deeply entrenched or politically fraught.

When we took office with winter looming, and hundreds living in unsafe, unsanitary encampments—we didn't look away: We built a new model for housing

and services so tents could come down and people could heal. And through the Newmarket BID's Back to Work program, folks who were once living at Mass & Cass are now part of the team working to keep the area clean and safe for everyone. Some of those leaders are here tonight. Mike, and Mike, Tim, Carlos, and Melissa: we are honored to be doing this important work together.

When Omicron spiked and pushed our hospitals to the brink, we didn't turn away: taking decisive action for public health, because, no matter the backlash, Boston will never compromise on protecting our people. And I want to thank everyone at the Boston Public Health Commission, Executive Director Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, and all of our public health and healthcare workers.

When we learned the MBTA would finally make major repairs to the Orange line—but with just two weeks' notice—we didn't back away: every City department stepped in to keep Boston moving and proved that a more connected, coordinated system is possible. Tonight, I'm renewing my call for the people of Boston to have a seat on the MBTA Board.

Under extraordinary circumstances, our team has refused to settle. Over the last year:

We made three bus lines entirely fare-free. Now, we're accelerating over two dozen miles of new dedicated bus lanes, expanding our bike network, and organizing even more neighborhood Open Streets events.

We worked alongside residents in Egleston Square and business partners to secure a Community Peace Garden on Washington Street; and helped 40 artists in Uphams Corner go from facing eviction to owning their own building—the Humphreys Street Studio is here to stay. And, this year we'll make Boston's largest investment ever in artists and the arts.

We made the spaces and services of our City more accessible: opening a new, fully-accessible City Hall Plaza and senior center in Orient Heights, partnering with the City Council and our Disability Commission to require closed captioning on public TVs, connecting 19,000 seniors to services; and making our 311 app multilingual for the first time, in eleven languages. We reopened a newly renovated Roslindale Branch library...this year we will reopen the Faneuil Branch in Oak Square, and begin design in Fields Corner and the South End.



MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY JEREMIAH ROBINSON

Gov. Maura Healey, Mayor Michelle Wu and State Treasurer Deborah Goldberg after the 2023 State of the City Address at the MGM Music Hall in Fenway.

Our Office of Early Childhood made dozens of new Pre-K classrooms free for our littlest learners and launched a professional development program to help early educators teach in Boston, debt-free. We fought off a state takeover of Boston Public Schools, onboarded a new district leadership team, and just welcomed our first electric school buses at the Readville bus yard.

Our police officers took nearly 900 guns off our streets and worked with community to achieve the lowest level of Part One, violent and property crime in 15 years. I want to thank Commissioner Michael Cox for coming home to Boston, Superintendent-in-Chief Greg Long for your service over 18 months as Acting Commissioner, and all our officers for your hard work.

We are looking to end community violence with new strategies to address trauma and provide essential supports—from our Youth Safety Task Force, to an alternative crisis response program with EMS and behavioral health services. And, this April, we will launch a Fire Cadet Program thanks to the

leadership of our new Fire Commissioner, Paul Burke.

We also graduated our first class of students from Boston's PowerCorps program, training young people from our neighborhoods for great jobs in the green economy. Many of them are here tonight.

We've invested in longstanding Legacy Businesses and are helping new entrepreneurs fill vacant retail spaces to revitalize our neighborhood commercial districts. And we're excited that Lego is building their North American headquarters in Boston this fall. We made progress on closing the supplier diversity gap, awarding contracts worth more than \$100 million—from school lunches to snow removal—to businesses owned by women and people of color. Thanks to legislation passed by the City Council and approved by the state legislature last month, we'll be able to do even more. And we did all this on top of filling 5,000 potholes, collecting more than 500 tons of curbside composting, and plowing through 53 inches of

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## Harvest on Vine

Emergency Food Pantry

Food distributions take place on the  
second Saturday at 10:00AM, and the last  
Tuesday of each month at 2:00PM.

Director, Tom MacDonald 617-990-7314

# DiDomenico, Project Bread launch campaign to pass universal school meals

Last week, Senator Sal DiDomenico teamed up with Project Bread, a nationally recognized anti-hunger organization, to launch a statewide campaign to pass his Universal School Meals bill, An Act relative to universal school meals. This legislation, sponsored by DiDomenico, would provide free breakfast and lunch to every child in a Massachusetts school. Senator DiDomenico was also joined by Representative Andy Vargas, who sponsors the bill in the House, dozens of elected officials, anti-hunger advocates, educators, and a video message from Congressman Jim McGovern.

Thankfully, schools across the state have been providing Universal School Meals throughout the pandemic because costs and paperwork for this program were temporarily footed by the federal government. In 2022, federal support for the program was cut off, but Senator DiDomenico secured enough funding in last year's state budget to continue funding free school meals throughout the Commonwealth for the current school year. The Senate and House must



Sal DiDomenico Speaking at Project Bread Event.

pass the Universal School Meal bills (SD1013 and HD766) in order to continue providing free breakfast and lunch at our schools indefinitely.

"We have heard time and again from educators, advocates, and parents, that kids cannot learn when they are hungry," said Senator DiDomenico, the lead sponsor of the Senate bill and Assistant Majority Leader of the Massa-



At the table, Michael Baldassarre, the superintendent of schools in Uxbridge and a former educator and administrator in Everett and Woburn, Sarah Coughlin, legislative chair of the School Nutrition Association and the nutrition director at Braintree Public Schools, Dr. Awab Ali Ibrahim (speaking), a pediatrician at Mass General Brigham, Erin McAleer, executive director of Project Bread, Sen. Sal DiDomenico and Rep. Andy Vargas.

chusetts Senate. "Providing free breakfast and lunch in schools will empower all our students to study, focus, and live up to their full potential. It is past time, in the year 2023, that we finally pass my commonsense bill into law and ensure no child will ever go hungry

in a Massachusetts school again."

This program has been a massive success in Massachusetts over the past two school years. Over 50,000 more students were eating lunch daily when costs were lifted, which allowed them to focus on class and relieved a financial

burden from their parents. This is a crucial program especially as costs for housing, transportation, healthcare, and more have been rising. Passing this legislation into law is critical for the wellbeing of our children and working families throughout the Commonwealth.

# Wu submits home rule petition to end urban renewal

Special to the Times

Mayor Michelle Wu on Monday submitted to the City Council a proposed Home Rule Petition to end Urban Renewal in Boston. If approved by the City Council, the Home Rule Petition would be sent to the State House for approval by the Massachusetts legislature. The proposed legislation would create new tools to meet future needs such as climate change resilience infrastructure, and retain the Boston Planning & Development Agency's (BPDA) ability to enforce restrictions that protect community assets, such as affordable housing and open space. The proposal will also update the statutory mission of the BPDA by establishing a new charter for advancing resil-

ience, affordability, and equity. Mayor Wu today also submitted an order to the City Council requesting a two-year extension of remaining Urban Renewal plans to allow time for legislative approval of the Home Rule Petition.

## Urban Renewal

The proposed Act would end the ability to make land takings based on blighted, decadent, or substandard conditions in the City. It also entitles the agency to enforce any conditions and restrictions in existing plans that protect important community benefits such as affordable housing, open space, and community uses.

## New Charter

The legislation directs the BPDA to prepare and implement plans

that address three key planning principles: 1) resiliency, including climate change mitigation and adaptation; 2) affordability, including the creation and retention of affordable housing and support for local businesses; and 3) equity, in the form of community development plans that ensure the equitable distribution of benefits derived from development in the City, and redress historical inequitable policies that may have led to inequities in the City's growth. The legislation would require that all plans be approved by the mayor.

## Modernizing the BPDA

Since 2016, the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) has been the operating name of two legal entities: the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) of Boston. This legislation will simplify Boston's quasi-governmental entity by abolishing the BRA and EDIC and transferring the powers and duties of those entities into a new, singular entity named the BPDA. As Mayor Wu announced in her 2023 State of the City address, the quasi-governmental entity, which will be named the the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA)

legally upon passage of this legislation, is envisioned to be staffed by City employees who work for a City Planning & Design Department and report to the Chief of Planning. The migration of current BPDA staff to this new City department will take place over the next 1 to 2 years.

## Temporary Urban Renewal Extension

The Order submitted today, which requires approval of the City Council, the BPDA Board, and the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development, extends protections on 12 existing Urban Renewal plan areas beyond the current sunset date of March 31, 2023. The extension will guard land use protections currently in place and give time for the Home Rule Petition to pass. Once passed, the temporary extensions will remain in place through March 31, 2025, or until passage of the proposed Home Rule Petition.

## Executive Order on New Direction for Planning and Development

In her 2023 State of the City last week, Mayor Wu announced a new direction for planning and development that ensures resilience, affordability and equity goals guide the City's growth.

Today, Mayor Wu also issued an Executive Order to ensure that direction. The Executive Order directs the BPDA to invest in reforming Boston's zoning code and to prioritize community engagement in that planning work. It also directs the Chief of Planning to create a coastal resilience delivery team responsible for preparing Boston for sea level rise and directs the BPDA to use its portfolio of property to advance the City of Boston's priorities. The Executive Order also instructs the BPDA to use its existing powers to act in accordance with the Home Rule Petition filed.

Ward 1 City Councilor Gabriela Coletta said, "I applaud the move by Mayor Wu to embed climate resiliency, affordability, and equity within the planning process in the City of Boston. East Boston, Charlestown, and the North End are uniquely vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change. The creation of the Coastal Resilience Delivery team is much welcomed after months of advocacy from my office for more resources and coordination. I look forward to working with the team to realize and deliver climate resiliency for District One and the entire City of Boston."

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STATE OF THE CITY *(from pg. 7)*

snow last year.

In so many other cities, none of this would have been possible. But Boston has never let anyone else define our possibilities.

It's thanks to the people of Boston that I can stand here tonight and say—the state of the City is strong.

And we have the resources, the resolve, and the responsibility to make it even stronger. As we look to the year ahead, our administration is focused on building a green and growing city for everyone.

Doing so will require that we reckon with—and rebuild—the systems that got us here. When the “Boston Redevelopment Authority” was created nearly 70 years ago, its purpose was singular: to clear the way for new development, even if that meant displacing tens of thousands of working class, immigrant, and Black and brown residents.

Since 2016 it's been called the Boston Planning and Development Agency, or “BPDA,” but the focus on building buildings rather than community has held back the talent of its staff and deepened disparities in our city.

Over the last decade, Boston saw the largest building boom in generations: cranes in the sky and jobs on the ground. But that growth wasn't harnessed for the benefit of all our communities. Not planning for community stability meant that even as our population grew, many were squeezed out. Not planning for affordability, and transit, meant that housing prices soared, and traffic snarled. Not planning for sustainability meant that as new development reshaped our skyline, public infrastructure continued to age: subway tracks and school buildings, pools and community centers.

Now, stronger storms and hotter summers raise the stakes. The pandemic has thinned our usual Downtown crowd, and inflation has forced many workers to balance two or three jobs just to keep milk in the fridge or make rent. In this moment of need, we have an opportunity and an obligation to change how we plan for Boston's future.

Under the leadership of our Chief of Planning, Arthur Jemison, we're charting a new course for growth, with people as our compass. Tomorrow I'll sign an executive order establishing a Planning Advisory Council to fully integrate long-range planning, and begin modernizing our zoning code. It will be led by Chief Jemison and consist of Cabinet chiefs in capital planning, transportation, climate, housing, and the arts.



MAYOR'S OFFICE PHOTO BY ISABEL LEON

*Mayor Michelle Wu delivers remarks during the 2023 State of the City address at the MGM Music Hall.*

Over this next year, we'll shift planning efforts from the BPDA to a new City Planning and Design Department—to expand planning and urban design as a coordinated effort that guides our growth. Our vision is for Boston to sustainably reach our peak population of 800,000 residents with the housing and schools, parks and public transit to support that growth.

Next week we'll file a home-rule petition to formally end the decades-old urban renewal mission of eradicating so-called “blight and urban decay,” and instead rededicate our resources toward Boston's urgent needs today—resiliency, affordability, and equity. Together, these changes will, for the first time since the 1960s, restore planning as a central function of City government.

I've also charged our team with improving the uneven and unpredictable approval process that frustrates community members and developers. Next month, we'll form a steering group of real estate and community leaders to recommend changes to our Article 80 development review process. We'll simplify and accelerate timelines so that good projects get shovels in the ground faster. We'll also transfer compliance and enforcement from the BPDA to the Office of Housing so our communities can be confident that we're always getting the full benefit of development agreements.

Of course, we can't grow sustainably unless our residents are secure in their homes. Our housing crisis displaces children and families, drives down enrollment in schools, hurts local businesses, increases homelessness, and strains our public health and safety systems.

So, our housing plan must be just as comprehensive. We'll deploy every tool, every strategy, and every resource to create more housing that residents can actually afford. We will prioritize keeping residents in their homes, and closing the racial wealth gap by boosting home ownership.

Last year, our Office of Housing permitted 3,800 housing units—the most since 2018, including 1,300 affordable units—the most in a generation. And we'll do even more by directing the bulk of our federal recovery dollars to housing. In the coming weeks, we'll be sending the City Council a Home Rule Petition on rent stabilization to end rent gouging, and protect our families from eviction and displacement.

And we're putting City land to work. We've analyzed every square foot of City-owned property and identified several parcels that could generate thousands of affordable housing units. We also have 150 vacant lots in our neighborhoods ready for housing. Local builders: work with us to design high-quality, affordable homes that enhance the surrounding neighborhood, and we'll give you the land for free. And we'll provide increased mortgage assistance so our residents can afford to buy these homes. We'll accelerate zoning changes for predictability and equity in our growth. Our team will update zoning for squares and corridors across the City, and complete neighborhood planning processes to bring thousands of new homes and support the small businesses, retail, and jobs that make Boston a vibrant cultural hub.

Our neighborhoods must be climate resilient and community focused. This year we will launch a civic and green space master plan, and begin design for new community centers in Grove Hall and the North End.

And, we'll help residents invest in retrofitting older homes, like triple deckers, to save money on utility bills and protect against flooding and heat. And we'll walk the walk with municipal buildings, too.

Meeting our climate goals starts with ending our use of fossil fuels, so I'm signing an Executive Order requiring all new City construction and major renovations in our schools, municipal buildings, and public housing, to be entirely fossil-fuel free.

And because “green” and “affordable” go hand in hand, together with the Boston Housing Authority, by 2030, we will end the use of fossil fuel in the City's public housing developments. This

will mean unprecedented investments to modernize these buildings and meet Governor Healey's ambitious goals for heat pump deployment—ensuring that the families with greatest need, benefit first—from healthier homes, and lower energy costs.

Together, we can build a Boston that's more green than concrete. Where housing is a given, not a godsend, and mobility is the minimum, not a miracle. Where the things we build inspire—but don't define—us; and where each generation shines brighter than the last.

Which brings me to the next generation. As mayor, and as a mom, fighting for the future that my two boys—and all our kids—deserve is what drives the urgency behind all that we do.

Like our approach to planning, Boston's approach to education has been deeply shaped by our history. The story is one that many of us know well—and it deserves telling—but that's for next year's State of the City. Tonight, I want to share a few of the things we're doing right now to strengthen our schools, support our teachers, and do right by our students.

I'll start with the spaces where learning happens: we know what world-class school facilities feel like. Just around the corner from here, is the brand new Boston Arts Academy—it's beautiful, energy efficient, meeting the needs and the possibility of our young people. But we haven't been moving fast enough. The Josiah Quincy Upper School in Chinatown will be our next brand new, state-of-the-art high school, but the project was kicked off in 2012: three Mayors and six superintendents ago. Students in 1st grade when this project started will have graduated from high school by the time it's finished.

We're making changes to speed up not just individual schools, but our whole district. Our school design study will take a full year off the planning process for every new school in the City, and we'll get more projects going at once than ever before.

Of course, our vision for our students goes beyond facilities: Superintendent Skipper and I won't settle for anything less than academic excellence across all our schools, accessible to all our students. Under newly created leadership roles focused on academics and getting resources down to the school level, we're investing in staff, professional development, and curriculum—for the equitable literacy foundation that empowers rigor and engagement across all subjects.

We'll follow through on our landmark agreement with BPS teachers to co-design and transform how we serve students with disabilities by investing \$50 million in inclusion so every student gets the education they deserve. And, because we know our students are people and family members first, we are investing in social workers and counselors at every school, with dedicated bilingual social workers trained to meet the needs of our multilingual students and families.

Last spring, to prepare our students for tomorrow's opportunities, we announced new early college and innovation pathways at five high schools across BPS where young people get real work experience and take college level courses in fields like finance, health care, and biotech. Tonight, I am announcing that—in partnership with UMass Boston—we'll build on that foundation by piloting a Year 13 program at Fenway High School. This will give our students an additional full year of college-level courses debt-free as they transition to college and accelerate toward a degree.

If we expect our young people to be the leaders our world needs, then it's on all of us to take every step to ensure they have the skills and experience to meet this moment.

We recently celebrated the creation of our new Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement—that's right, OYEA—with a group of students from the Blackstone School and they didn't hold back. They asked about plans for after school programming and when the pool would reopen. And a third grader in a pink puffy coat wanted to know: “Como se siente ser alcaldesa? How does it feel to be mayor?” And I didn't know what to say. “Ocupada,” I told her. “Busy.” Which is true. But it's also so much more than that.

It can feel surreal and stressful, exhausting and empowering—it feels like the most important work in the world. But more than anything, it feels like a gift: To be able to get up every day and go to work for the city I love with people who love it, too. People unafraid to do things differently—willing to meet crises with creativity, and reach deep in the dirt to pull up the roots of the challenges that block our view of the sky. Boston is a city that will never stop reaching—up toward the progress we know to be possible, and out to the community whose work makes it lasting.

Thank you, and God bless the City—and people—of Boston.

# Housing advocates seek new statewide rent control legislation with 5% cap

Special to the Times

On Saturday, over 300 advocates, allies, and supporters from across the state chanted “5% rent control NOW!” as they introduced newly-filed legislation for statewide rent control. An Act enabling cities and towns to stabilize rents and protect tenants (HD3953/SD1818) was filed last week by Representatives Dave Rogers and Samantha Montaño and Senator Pat Jehlen in partnership with Homes For All Massachusetts, SEIU Massachusetts State Council, and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute. HD3953/SD1818 introduces a clearer framework for municipal rent control than other local option bills filed in recent years, with stronger tenant protections and a 5% maximum limit on rent increases.

A long list of tenants and small landlords from Boston, Randolph,



Hundreds attend a rent control rally at State House.

Lynn, Ayer, Acton, Malden, and across the state spoke to the crowd, detailing the effects of rent increases on their families and neighbor-

hoods. Lenor Pieriera, the member of New England United for Justice, said “I’m proud to be here as a member of the Homes For All coalition in support of rent control. I’m a small landlord in Mattapan and I know how important it is to stabilize rent because this means stabilizing the housing needs of our neighborhood...and I ask all of you to stand with us in this fight”.

If passed, HD3953/SD1818 will give municipalities across the state the option to adopt a rent control policy that would tie rent increases to the inflation rate, with a maximum increase of 5% per year – protecting tenants from rapidly rising inflation and promoting long-term affordability within the housing market. The bill prevents no-fault evictions, which are extremely common in the state and have been on the rise since 2022, and grants a five year exemption to any new development from 2020 onwards. It provides exemptions for small landlords, defined as owner-occupied buildings with 4 or fewer units.

Denise Perrault, drove 45 miles to the rally. “I’m facing a no-fault eviction, and this is probably the 4th one for me... There are 110 units where I live, and 50 people facing eviction,” Perrault said.. Ramona Almanzar, who came with a coalition of tenants from Lynn with Lynn United for Change, addressed the crowd emotionally: “My child had dreams of going to university and now says he should go to work instead of going to college to help pay for the rent increase. It is painful to know my son thinks he can’t attend college because of this rent increase. Without rent control, living will only become harder for low-income families like mine.” Ramona and her neighbors recent-

ly formed a tenant association to try to negotiate a more fair rent increase with their landlord; a rent control policy could have prevented the increase she is facing.

Nearly half of all Massachusetts renters and over 70% of very low-income renters are burdened with unaffordable housing costs. Since 2010, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom in MA has increased by 55%. Rent-burdened households are disproportionately Black and Latinx, and nationally, the median savings of rent-burdened tenants is \$10. Statewide in Massachusetts, landlords filed nearly twice as many evictions per renter in neighborhoods of color compared to predominantly white neighborhoods. Boston consistently ranks as one of the most expensive cities in the country, with stark and worsening racial disparities: a recent report showed 7 out of 10 evictions filed in Boston were in neighborhoods where the majority of renters are people of color like Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury. And for all the attention Boston’s skyrocketing prices receive, neighborhoods in the Central and Southeast Massachusetts housing court divisions see even higher rates of eviction filings in court, with single mothers facing some of the highest rates of evictions statewide.

“I’m Boston born and raised, and I live in an [income-restricted] IDP unit... these are supposed to be affordable units,” exclaimed Shameeka Moreno, organizer of the Boston Tenant Coalition and Coalition for Truly Affordable Boston, “so please accommodate the units for the people who live there, don’t raise the rent every year— \$100 [rent increases] are a lot for someone who only gets a disability check.”

Housing justice advocates have been fighting to bring rent control back to Massachusetts since it was banned in 1994, when the real estate industry organized to ban rent control ordinances in the Commonwealth and across the country. Since 1994, rents and housing costs have spiraled far out of reach for working families and especially for people of color and single-parent households. Homes For All Massachusetts members support a range of legislation to address the issues of displacement and lack of affordable housing but prioritize rent control as an immediate need to curb displacement. “We need to transform the whole housing system to put people before profit,” said Isaac Simon Hodes of Lynn United For

Change. “But rent control is one of the most urgent priorities right now. We need to stop the bleeding, the irreversible damage of eviction and displacement. Rent control doesn’t need 10 years to be built, it doesn’t need billions in financing— all we need is courage and strength of the people to make it happen now.”

Saturday marked the largest rally for rent control since 2020. The movement toward lifting the ban on rent control in Massachusetts has been gaining momentum in recent years after decades of organizing with increasing popular support and attention in municipal and statewide discussions and political campaigns. Nationally, several states and cities are adopting rent control policies. Oregon, New York, and California all enacted major tenant protection and rent control bills in 2020, and voters in St. Paul and Minneapolis passed rent control measures in 2021. President Biden just last week introduced federal tenant protections in response to the push for protections and rent controls around the country. Now, front-line residents and advocates are determined to add Massachusetts to the growing list of states passing strong rent control legislation to protect tenants from displacement.

Right to the City Boston (RTCBC) is an alliance of community-based organizations in Boston. We come together around a shared vision for the Right to Remain. RTCBC is a multi-issued alliance of grassroots voices representing low-income, POC/immigrant communities working together for change! Our core leaders are: Alternatives for Community and Environment, Chinese Progressive Association, City Life/Vida Urbana and New England United 4 Justice. As an alliance, our agenda includes: The right to stable community, the right to economic justice, the right to democratic participation, the right to public good and the right to a healthy environment.

Homes for All Massachusetts is a statewide formation of grassroots housing justice groups working to halt displacement, increase community control of land, and win housing justice. Current core member organizations are: Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Arise for Social Justice, Chinatown Community Land Trust, Chinese Progressive Association, City Life/Vida Urbana, Lynn United for Change, New England United for Justice, Right to the City Boston, and Springfield No One Leaves.

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# NFPA urges caution when using home heating equipment

The National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®) is urging the public to use added caution when heating their homes during the winter months, when nearly half (46 percent) of all U.S. home heating equipment fires occur. Home heating equipment is the second-leading cause of U.S. home fires and home fire injuries, and the third-leading cause of home fire deaths and direct property damage.

According to the latest Home Heating Fires report from NFPA, an average of 44,210 home heating fires occurred each year between 2016 and 2020, resulting in an estimated 480 civilian deaths, 1,370 civilian injuries, and \$1 billion in direct property damage.

“During the coldest months of the year, home heating equipment kicks into high gear, so making sure it is in good working order and used properly is critical to reducing the likelihood of fire,” said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at NFPA. “By better understanding when and where home heating fires happen, people can take the steps to minimize associated risks and safely heat their homes.”

Home fires caused by heating equipment were less likely to occur in the overnight hours from midnight to 6 a.m. (13 percent), but they accounted for more than two out of five fatalities (43 percent), as well as disproportionate shares of injuries (22 percent) and direct property damage (20 percent).

Space heaters are most often

responsible for home heating equipment fires, accounting for one-third of the fires, as well as the vast majority of associated deaths (88 percent) and injuries (80 percent).

NFPA offers these tips and guidelines for safely heating your home during the winter months:

Heating equipment and chimneys should be cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.

Keep anything that can burn at least three feet (one meter) away from all heating equipment, including furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters.

Always use the right kind of fuel, as specified by the manufacturer, for fuel-burning space heaters.

Create a three-foot (one meter) “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.

Make sure space heaters are in good working order and used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.

Fireplaces should have a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container, which should be placed outside at least 10 feet away from your home.

All fuel-burning equipment should be vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

If you smell gas in your gas

heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the home immediately and call your local fire department or gas company.

Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are located throughout the home; test them monthly to ensure that they’re working properly.

NFPA offers a wealth of home heating safety tips, information, and resources to help better educate the public about ways to safely heat their homes. In addition, NFPA’s “Put a Freeze on Winter Fires” campaign with the U.S. Fire Administration works to promote a host of winter safety issues, including home heating.

For this release and other announcements about NFPA initiatives, research, and resources, please visit the NFPA press room.

About the National Fire Protection Association® (NFPA®)

Founded in 1896, NFPA® is a global, self-funded, nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. The association delivers information and knowledge through more than 300 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. For more information, visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed online for free at [www.nfpa.org/freemembership](http://www.nfpa.org/freemembership).

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