

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR ERIN MURPHY, Flaherty, Mejia, Baker, Bok, Breadon, Flynn, Louijeane, Fernandes-Anderson, Arroyo, Worrell and Lara



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER TFOR A HEARING TO ADDRESS THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN OUR CITY

- WHEREAS,** The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Academy of Pediatrics, and Children’s Hospital Association have declared a national emergency for children and adolescent mental health; *and*
- WHEREAS,** On December 7, 2021 the U.S. Surgeon General issued a new advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the youth mental health crisis. The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the mental health of our youth; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The mental health challenges that our children were facing before the pandemic were of great concern. The Covid-19 pandemic has only intensified these concerns as the pandemic continues to take an alarming toll on our children’s mental health; *and*
- WHEREAS,** This pandemic began as an infectious disease but has evolved into a mental health crisis as our youth continue to face physical isolation, fear, stress at school and home, grief, and ongoing uncertainty. Many refer to this as a pandemic within a pandemic; *and*
- WHEREAS,** According to the Pew Research Center, Black and Latinx children have seen more COVID-19-related infection and death in their communities. Their families have suffered disproportionate economic setbacks as well, with Hispanic women and immigrants among the groups most affected by job loss during pandemic. They are at higher risk for food insecurity and unstable housing; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Between March and October 2020, the percentage of emergency department visits for children with mental health emergencies rose by 24 percent for children ages 5-11 and 31 percent for children ages 12-17. There was also a more than 50 percent increase in suspected suicide attempt emergency department visits among girls ages 12-17 in early 2021 as compared to the same period in 2019; *and*

WHEREAS, Our families, caregivers, schools, community centers, faith based organizations, health centers, and hospitals are caring for young people with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities; *and*

WHEREAS, Local hospitals are reporting that 20 percent of the psychiatric patients coming through the emergency room have never sought mental health services before. The Emergency Department is not only expensive but not the most effective way to launch a treatment plan for the patient; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss progress towards ensuring that every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care. That we put supports in place for the mental health of our children in schools, community, and childcare settings. We sustain funding for effective school-based mental health care and address the economic and social barriers that contribute to the lack of mental health for our young people. Discuss increase funding for evidence-based mental health screening, diagnosis, and treatment, particularly for underprivileged populations and strengthen suicide prevention programs in schools, primary care, and community response teams. Representatives from the Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Medical Reserve Corps, Office of Health and Wellness, community advocates, and the public, will be invited to testify.

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