

Offered by Councilors Matt O'Malley and Lydia Edwards



**AN ORDER FOR A HEARING ON ESTABLISHING
A MUNICIPAL FAIR HOUSING TESTING
PROGRAM IN THE CITY OF BOSTON**

WHEREAS: Through historic federal housing policies such as redlining and exclusionary zoning, cities were complicit in creating segregation and therefore it is the responsibility of the City of Boston to identify and end housing discrimination and racial segregation; and

WHEREAS: In the Suffolk University Law School's July 2020 report, "Qualified Renters Need Not Apply: Race and Voucher Discrimination in the Metro Boston Housing Market," testing uncovered evidence of discrimination based on voucher status in 86% of the tests, and discrimination based on the prospective renter's race in 71% of the tests; and

WHEREAS: There exists a high degree of wealth inequality along racial lines, and in 2014 the Boston Planning & Development Agency (formerly known as the Boston Redevelopment Authority) concluded that poverty rates among Non-White residents are "notably high," and a 2015 study from The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that Non-White households in Boston hold only a fraction of the net worth of white households; and

WHEREAS: Federal and State laws prohibit discrimination in the sale and rental of housing by property owners, landlords, property managers, mortgage lenders, and real estate agents based on a wide variety of factors, including race and source of income; and

WHEREAS: The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston released a 2019 study which found that Housing Choice voucher holders who are Black encountered greater obstacles in their housing searches than voucher holders of other races, and that Black voucher holders who searched for housing in "higher-opportunity" neighborhoods faced even greater levels of discrimination from landlords; and

WHEREAS: The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) guidelines instruct municipalities to enact local public fair housing enforcement strategies to combat housing discrimination and segregation; and

WHEREAS: AFFH encourages the use of fair housing audits to measure and document housing discrimination through the use of paired testing, which is currently solely performed in the Boston region by the The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston; and

WHEREAS: The Boston City Council's Committee on Government Operations' Docket #0232: Order regarding a text amendment for Boston Zoning Code Relative to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing will add an equity analysis to planning and development review through the City's zoning code, and it will be adopted as the first of its kind in the country and **THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council conduct a hearing on establishing a municipal fair housing testing program, and that representatives from the Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Housing Authority, Office of Fair Housing and Equity, Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, and members of the public be invited to testify.

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