

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS ED FLYNN AND MICHAEL FLAHERTY

CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL



ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS INCREASING FINES FOR LARGE HOUSE PARTIES DISTURBING NEIGHBORS' QUALITY OF LIFE

WHEREAS: As we continue to be in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are concerning reports of large house parties across the City of Boston, with both indoor and outdoor gatherings with no masks or physical distancing measures in place throughout our neighborhoods; *and*

WHEREAS: Even as more people are getting vaccinated and restaurants slowly reopening, neighbors have highlighted that these large house parties oftentimes include renters with absentee landlords, sometimes inviting 30 to 40 people, which is not only concerning with the potential to become superspreader events, but also due to the negative impact on the quality of life for our residents; as these inconsiderate partiers disturb neighbors with loud noise at all hours of the night, while also leaving behind trash and litter on the street, attracting rodents and pests to their neighbors' property; *and*

WHEREAS: Governor Baker's previous COVID-19 Order No. 63 stated that no private gatherings be more than 10 persons in a single enclosed, indoor space, and failure to comply may result in a civil fine of up to \$500 per violation; however, despite the Governor's order and public health guidance, pandemic fatigue has given way to reports large house parties all over the city, with 600 911 calls in one weekend alone in South Boston; *and*

WHEREAS: Residents are to report large house parties to the Boston Police Department (BPD) at 911, which can trigger the Inspectional Services Department's (ISD) Investigation & Enforcement team to review, potentially place on the city's Problem Properties List and issue a \$500 fine, with the owner of the property required to address these violations; *and*

WHEREAS: As we continue to hear an overwhelming number of reports of large house parties, we need to talk about increased fines and accountability for property owners who allow this rude behavior, stricter enforcement with additional resources for ISD & BPD, and further mechanisms to disincentivize people from having large parties, including an increasing scale of fines on repeat offenders; *and*

WHEREAS: In the state of New York, individuals who violated the state's order on social gatherings can be fined up to \$2,000 for first offense, and up to a \$5,000 fine for a second violation; *and*

WHEREAS: Aside from issuing fines for violating the Governor's COVID-19 orders, and as our residents become vaccinated and businesses reopen, the City of Boston should also look to issue increased fines, perhaps starting at \$1000 for a first offense and for those who repeatedly violate regulations concerning the city's noise levels ordinance, explore \$2000 for a second offense, and \$3000 for a third offense; *and*

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the possibility of increasing fines for large house parties and gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Representatives from the Boston Police Department, Inspectional Services Department, Boston Public Health Commission, and other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.

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