

May 20, 2026

**Dear City Council,**

As a broad coalition of community-based organizations, advocates and residents including youth and seniors across the city of Boston, we're delivering this mandate to **restore the proposed FY27 budget cuts to:**

- **Youth jobs**
- **Housing**
- **Food access and urban agriculture**
- **Immigration (MOIA grants)**
- **Participatory budgeting**
- **Elder support (Age strong grants)**
- **Boston Public Schools**

**Invest in our youth, elders, and programs that meet people's basic needs for housing, food, immigration support, and real public safety.** These priority areas come from the People's Budget, a process in which over 1,000 residents shared their budget priorities and discussed what Bostonians need via working groups and assemblies. Most of these are the same priority areas we saw almost 5,000 Bostonians vote to fund in the city-led participatory budgeting process.

At a time when we need leadership to protect against the assault on multi-racial working class communities from the federal government, the Mayor's proposed cuts instead abandon the most vulnerable residents struggling with unemployment, evictions and rising rents, food insecurity and attacks from ICE and overpolicing. **The budget cuts vital funding to our schools, youth and most vulnerable populations, and it reverses years of progress where the City Council used its budget powers to invest in Boston communities. This year's budget cannot move forward with small amendments as usual, which would be insufficient to fully reverse cuts to community investments and protect past City Council amendments. In order to fully restore the cuts and protect the rightful power of the City Council to invest in communities, we urge you to reject the operating budget as proposed by Mayor Wu in your first budget vote. Stand with the community to demand a budget that invests in our current needs and our vision for a thriving city.**

### **Youth Jobs: \$6 million**

The cut to Youth Employment and Opportunity is the biggest single cut to any department in the proposed budget. It would eliminate 1,800 school-year jobs that young people depend on for learning opportunities, career development, supporting and strengthening families and creating safer communities. Investing in youth jobs and community organizations is the #1 safety prevention strategy identified by Mayor Wu's own administration last spring in the summer safety plan. The City's own data shows that youth jobs reduce young people's participation in violent crimes by 35% and property crimes by 57%. So many families rely on these jobs and would leave them without important income they have relied on. In reality, the City budget needs to expand to fund more school-year jobs, with organizations ready to hire more than 5000 young people instead of the 1800 jobs that are funded, rather than eliminating the program and decimating opportunities for the current youth who are employed. The City must fund school-year youth jobs in its own budget as a core investment in young people and the entire city's wellbeing, rather than pass responsibility to a system of unsustainable private funding.

### **Mayor's Office of Immigrant Advancement grant programs: \$1.8 million**

The proposed cut would eliminate all grant programs from MOIA, including legal support and representation grants and culturally relevant mental health and healing grants. We are in the midst of an all-out attack on our immigrant neighbors and need more resources than ever to keep people safe and supported. For an issue that Mayor Wu and the Council claim is a priority to them, at least restoring the \$1.8M is the bare minimum. Over 100 organizations received these grants in FY26 and from those partners, we know the need is much greater than \$1.8M; in FY26, applications for the mental health grant programs totaled over \$3.5M alone, and the need for the legal resource grants is at least five times the \$900,000 that was available last year.

### **Food Access grants: \$630,000**

The proposed budget cuts \$200,000 for grant programs from the Office of Food Justice and \$430,000 for grant programs from the GrowBoston office (under Mayor's Office of Housing) that support community gardens, urban farms, and getting fresh locally grown food to residents. According to the [Greater Boston Food Bank 2025 report](#), 49% of Boston households are food insecure. We anticipate further and future federal cuts to food access funding and need the city and state to fill in gaps to make sure these households can get food.

### **Housing: \$5.25 million**

The proposed budget cuts \$5.25 million from the Mayor's Office of Housing. This amount must be restored; in particular, we support investing more in the following areas:

- Eviction prevention, including funding for emergency rental assistance for people facing eviction, as well as access to legal counsel, both of which are highly utilized programs. 75% of evictions in Boston are due to non-payment with most of those being for under \$5K and the eviction prevention funds are critical to keeping people housed.
- Creating more truly affordable housing and more city housing vouchers.
- Preventing displacement and protecting existing affordable housing by funding the Acquisition Opportunity Program (AOP).

### **Participatory Budgeting project funding: \$1M**

The proposed budget cuts around \$1 million from special appropriations for participatory budgeting. The second cycle of participatory budgeting funded \$2.2M of projects, and the operating budget needs to fully fund this amount. We've seen in the past two cycles that winning projects meet residents' daily needs and are in high demand. This is the only pot of money that residents get to directly decide how to spend and is flexible to meet changing conditions, like the projects that funded legal support for immigrants and filled in food resources when SNAP benefits were cut and *remains one of the only grant programs left to support programming by community organizations in this proposed budget*. While the Mayor is using funds allocated in previous fiscal years to fund participatory budgeting projects, those available funds are nearing their end and we need sustained, regular annual funding in the budget.

### **Age Strong grants: \$1.3M**

This eliminates both the Behavioral Health and Expanding Engagement grant programs and reduces funding for other programs. Age Strong's grant programs are critical to serving Boston's older residents across diverse cultural, linguistic, and neighborhood needs, and are designed to address specific gaps in programming and services. In FY26, 45 community and cultural organizations used grants to expand capacity to provide culturally and linguistically relevant behavioral health clinical services and engagement programming across the city.

### **We suggest the following strategies to restore the cuts:**

We support the Council in going through your annual process to identify your priority amendments and sharing those priorities to the Mayor, while also first rejecting the

budget so that you send a strong message that the current budget needs major revisions. The Mayor has tools for setting available revenue in the budget and using free cash that would easily make an additional \$16 million available in a \$4.9 billion budget; since the City Council cannot use these tools directly, rejecting the budget is a critical strategy for accessing these solutions.

- Identify personnel and program costs that did not fully spend their FY26 budget line items and in the last few years.
- Move money from the Boston Police department, which continues to increase annually while the services and programs that support people and prevent harm from occurring in the first place get cut. 75% of respondents to the People's Budget survey support reducing the police budget and residents specifically support:
  - Freezing hiring or delaying a new class of officers. The proposed salary line item for BPD is increasing by \$9.9M in FY27 from the FY26 adopted budget, including because of newly passed pay raises. Boston already has hundreds more officers than similarly sized cities. Nor does hiring more officers reduce overtime costs; research from the ACLU shows that “there has been no correlation between a larger police force and lower police overtime spending.” In a year where BPS and other departments are seeing hiring freezes or layoffs, the Police Department should also be asked to reduce staffing costs. In addition, the budget regularly underestimates salary savings from vacant BPD positions, so to budget responsibility the City must make the salaries line item reflect accurate numbers.
  - Decreasing funding for the Boston Regional Intelligence Center or BRIC, which has a total of \$4.18 million in the proposed budget.
  - Reducing the overtime budget. The City has reduced overtime hours not just through contract reform but also through management practices emphasizing efficiencies and accountability. While overtime hours must be paid out after they are assigned, the City Council must send a strong message with the budget that the City must conduct stronger oversight of overtime usage.
- Call on the Mayor to adjust the expected revenue available in the budget; actual revenue has been \$53M-229M more than originally budgeted in recent years.
- Call on the Mayor to use more of the \$85.8M in the Parking Meter Fund to fund programs in the Streets budget so that more revenue can support departments facing major cuts.

- Call on the Mayor to use a modest amount of free cash to address current crises. As of April 2026 the City of Boston has \$601 million in free cash, well over the minimum required even with the supplemental budgets that use some free cash. Given the extenuating circumstances of this year, the Mayor should use a small portion of the city's free cash funds to restore cuts to grant programs that support residents through current crises and would have very serious implications for Bostonians. The Mayor can also identify additional projects in the proposed budget that are one-time expenses to fund with free cash, freeing up regular revenue to restore cuts.

We also support **restoring the proposed cuts to student-facing BPS staff**. While the BPS budget grows to approximately \$1.72 billion, too little of that investment is reaching classrooms and hundreds of school staff are facing cuts. Rising structural costs continue to absorb new funding, while schools face reductions in essential student-facing staff including teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, nurses, bilingual educators, and mental health providers.

When resources are more limited, it's critical for the city to be directly accountable to residents, asking Bostonians what is most needed right now. The way our tax dollars are allocated indicates what public services the city sees as essential and what are “nice to have”; we say affordable housing, food, immigration support, youth jobs, elder support and fully staffed schools are essential for our city.

### **Fund Us Or Fail Us,**

ACEDONE

Action for Equity

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE)

Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW)

Asian Pacific Islanders Civic Action Network (APIs CAN)

Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA)

Boston People's Response

Boston Ujima Project

Brazilian Women's Group

Center for Economic Democracy

Center to Support Immigrant Organizing (CSIO)

Chinese Progressive Association

Dorchester Not for Sale  
Equity Now and Beyond  
Families for Justice as Healing (FJAH)  
Fenway Forward (formerly Fenway CDC)  
Heal the Hood  
MassCOSH  
MassVOTE  
Muslim Justice League  
Neighborhood Food Action Collaborative (NFAC)  
Neighbors United for a Better East Boston (NUBE)  
New England Community Project (NECP)  
Reclaim Roxbury  
St. Stephen's Youth Programs  
Sisters Unchained  
Teen Empowerment  
The City School  
The Food Project  
True Alliance Center  
Youth Justice and Power Union (YJPU)  
The Better Budget Alliance