



April 16, 2020

Councilor Kenzie Bok  
Chair, Ways & Means  
1 City Hall Square, Suite 550  
Boston, MA 02201-2043

Dear Councilor Bok,

My name is Patricia Leary and I am the Community Advocacy Director for Boston at the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association is the largest voluntary health organization in the world working to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. These diseases remain our nation's #1 and #5 causes of mortality while stroke is a leading cause of disability.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments regarding Docket # 0588-0596: Orders for the FY21 operating budget and FY21 – FY25 capital budget for the City of Boston. During these unprecedented times, I commend Mayor Walsh, Cabinet Chiefs, City Departments, and members of the City Council for their quick response and commitment to the health and safety of all Bostonians.

The American Heart Association supports several public health and community investments in the Mayor's FY21 proposed budget. I will go through these areas of support and look forward to submitting more detailed remarks when these issues are discussed at their individual public hearings.

Food Access:

As you are aware, food insecurity is at an all-time high in the City. Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 5 Bostonians were food insecure, compared to 1 in 10 in Massachusetts.<sup>1</sup> These numbers are even worse for many children, communities of color, seniors, and immigrants, who face obstacles such as lack of affordability, unreliable/no transportation, and language and cultural barriers that prevent them from accessing the food they want and need. We support the proposed funding for the Office of Food Access, including funding to expand the Double Up Bucks program to additional stores in East Boston, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury (all of which happen to be American Heart Association priority neighborhoods). Demand for food access services like SNAP is at an all-time high. According to the Department of Transitional Assistance,

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<sup>1</sup> State of Food Security in the City of Boston. Data presented from the Boston Food Access Assessment conducted by the Mayor's Office of Food Access, 2019.

<https://boston.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=bde3986b2972483a835a2e49d6210737>



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Association.**

weekly SNAP applications have jumped 400%.<sup>2</sup> Boston has long been at the forefront of healthy food incentive programs for low-income residents and should continue to step up when Bostonians need it the most. The American Heart Association supports a robust increase in food access funding over the next several years, requesting a minimum of \$750,000 to support the ability of SNAP recipients to use their benefits at markets, fund infrastructure, development, and technical assistance needed to expand SNAP incentive programs for recipients and authorized retailers, and provide additional education and outreach through the Office of Food Access.

*Boston Public Health Commission:*

We fully support the increase in funding for the Boston Public Health Commission, which would bring funding over the \$100 million level for FY21. The American Heart Association supports an increase in dedicated funding for BPHC's Community Initiatives Bureau, which houses the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control and Healthy Homes and Community Supports programs. These programs lead BPHC's work on primary and secondary prevention of diet and tobacco-related chronic diseases, with a focus on obesity, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and cancer. These programs implement low-cost and evidence-based programming, promoting policies that reach all Bostonians, especially those who face chronic disease and health inequities. With additional funding, programs to prevent and address chronic disease among some of our most vulnerable residents can be expanded to include increased access to healthy foods, nutrition education, physical education opportunities, active transportation, blood pressure screenings, and tobacco cessation.

*Transportation, green space, and physical activity:*

The American Heart Association supports initiatives that create more livable and active communities and advocates for sustained funding to assist communities in implementing active transportation networks. We support the strong commitment the Mayor has made to invest in safe streets and sidewalks for all users (including an expansion of ADA compatible ramps), reliable and quality public transportation, interconnected neighborhoods, and expanded bike lanes and bike sharing programs throughout the City. We also support the proposed \$2.6 million FY21 investment in the Strategic Bicycle Network, which will fund the design and construction of 9 miles of new protected bike lanes over the next 2 years (part of the City's 4 year target of 15 new miles of high-quality protected bike infrastructure). We also favor initiatives to update parks and pathways, making them more accessible and equitable so they serve the diverse needs of all residents, as well as the expansion of community gardens, ball fields, and playing courts. Lastly, we support the various efforts the Mayor has put forth to address climate change in the City, including the creation of a \$3 million Climate Resilience Reserve project and the dedication of at least 10% of new capital funding for climate resilience projects.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nbcboston.com/investigations/snap-recipients-cant-purchase-groceries-online/2107724/>



**American  
Heart  
Association.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of the Mayor's proposed FY21 operating budget and FY21 – FY25 Capital budget. I look forward to following the budget process and submitting additional letters of support for critical public health funding.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia Leary".

Patricia Leary  
Community Advocacy Director – Boston  
American Heart Association

CC: City Councilors Kim Janey, Annissa Essaibi-George, Michael Flaherty, Julia Mejia, Michelle Wu, Lydia Edwards, Ed Flynn, Frank Baker, Andrea Campbell, Ricardo Arroyo, Matt O'Malley, and Liz Breadon.



Michelle Goldberg (City Council) <michelle.a.goldberg@boston.gov>

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## Property tax favors investors over voters

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**Boston.gov Contact Form** <79d0ecec385@contactform.boston.gov>

Wed, Apr 15, 2020 at 7:29 PM

Reply-To: Tim Cook <iloveboston88@gmail.com>, "Boston.gov Contact Form" <79d0ecec385@contactform.boston.gov>

To: ccc.wm@boston.gov

-- REPLY ABOVE THIS LINE --

Currently, the system is unfair to residents and favors investors (big and small)

1) Assessors appraise homes based on last sales in the neighborhood – so one or two sales can increase taxes in a whole street or area. Boston residents have been getting an annual tax hike for years. My taxes are 50% higher in the less 10 years. I have also now lost the federal tax deduction under Trump's tax cut

2) The investment property apartment building next to me is 50% bigger and pays 23% less in taxes on Per Sq ft basis. The tax code allows them to deduct an unlimited amount on mortgage interest ( if you live in a home its 750K), depreciate their property and deduct maintenance expense etc. Basically – we are giving massive favoritism to investors vs. residents. The investor also got a dramatic tax cut with Trump

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This message was sent using the contact form on Boston.gov. It was sent by Tim Cook from [iloveboston88@gmail.com](mailto:iloveboston88@gmail.com).  
It was sent from <https://www.boston.gov/departments/city-council/how-testify-city-council-budget-hearing>.  
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Michelle Goldberg (City Council) <michelle.a.goldberg@boston.gov>

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## Re: City Council Committee on Ways and Means Hearing on Dockets #0588-0596, FY21 Budget: Public Testimony - Any Questions?

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Don Kempner Warner Saklad <kempnerwarner@gmail.com>

Fri, Apr 17, 2020 at 4:25 PM

To: "Michelle Goldberg (City Council)" <michelle.a.goldberg@boston.gov>

Re: City Council Committee on Ways and Means Hearing on Dockets #0588-0596, FY21 Budget: Public Testimony - Any Questions?

Please make the Question available to all Councilors  
after words are added: "public funded" before "Stenographic Record"  
and words are added "and software" after "technology" so the Question is  
"For hard of hearing folks how might the public funded Stenographic Record  
be opened and available from weekly Wednesday Public Meetings of Boston City Council?  
a) Steno is more complete than Minutes  
b) Steno is more accurate than video captioning!

How might Boston City Council acquire more up to date technology and software  
for the Stenographic Record making it easier to put Steno online for hard of hearing folks?"

[Quoted text hidden]