

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO EXPLORE A RENT-TO-OWN PILOT PROGRAM

WHEREAS, The cost of rent throughout Boston has outpaced wage inflation and government rental assistance for decades, and has disproportionately impacted low-income residents; *and*

WHEREAS, In Roxbury, the average family earns 81 percent less than Boston’s average household income; *and*

WHEREAS, Though only two fifths of rentals are in majority Black neighborhoods in Boston, eviction filings took place in neighborhoods like Roxbury 64 percent of the time; *and*

WHEREAS, Inflated rents perpetuate the condition of poverty for residents; for example as families pay more towards living expenses, other needs, like health and education, are likely to go unmet; *and*

WHEREAS, Oppressive rent costs and limited housing supply have forced families to “double up” into units, settle for health compromising locations such as basements, or be forced to move to more affordable cities; *and*

WHEREAS, This can sustain states of poverty and have massive impacts on the health and life outcomes of residents; *and*

WHEREAS, Areas with higher rates of stable homeownership benefit from consistent neighborhood upkeep and maintenance, greater social capital, and better psychological health, and additionally, resident stability is associated with safer outcomes, with lower rates of crimes reported in stable homeowner communities and areas with lower rates of vacant lots; *and*

WHEREAS, Property ownership represents the largest asset and source of wealth for Americans; and the ability to tap into the wealth gained from the value of property allows a cushion from emergency costs and greater ability to invest in diverse ways; *and*

WHEREAS, Exclusionary and racist housing policies of the twentieth century have prevented generations of families of color from growing wealth tied to the value of property

within Boston and beyond, which has had a large impact on the modern wealth gap between white and Black households; *and*

WHEREAS, Furthermore, it has left an economic impact on the community of Roxbury as a whole, as disinvestment, urban renewal, and redlining led to the deterioration of the existing housing stock and issues related to overcrowding; *and*

WHEREAS, In Boston, around 80 percent of white families own their homes and have on average a quarter of a million dollars in wealth, compared to Black families in Boston, with an average of \$8 in wealth, and own their homes just a third of the time; *and*

WHEREAS, Wealth gaps perpetuate racial inequities across the city, with a lack of wealth corresponding with poverty, instability, and restricted social mobility; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston has made great strides in past years to invest in the creation of affordable housing, including through voucher programs, linkage, inclusionary development, and the exploration of mixed use city buildings, but many residents are still in need of greater support to access true housing stability as a means to a better future; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore the possibility of a City rent-to-own pilot program for residents that provides a path to homeownership for qualified renters in the City, and that representatives from the Administration, including the Mayor's Office of Housing, Boston Planning & Development Agency, Boston Housing Authority, other relevant entities, and other interested parties be invited to attend.

Filed on: March 4, 2022