



CITY OF BOSTON

IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER OF CITY COUNCILOR MATT O'MALLEY

- WHEREAS:** On Tuesday, April 7th 2020, Wisconsin held its primary election with in-person voting, despite being under a shelter-in-place order since March 25th 2020; and
- WHEREAS:** Concerns about the outbreak of the coronavirus for the Wisconsin primary contributed to a shortage of poll workers, leading to the National Guard dispersing over 2,000 troops to serve in their stead; and
- WHEREAS:** Due to the lack of poll workers, the City of Milwaukee opened only five of their 180 polling locations where the average wait time to vote was an hour and half to two hours; and
- WHEREAS:** Having voters and poll workers at polling stations for hours is dangerous and runs counter to social distancing and best practices aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19; and
- WHEREAS:** The states of Oregon, Washington, and Colorado conduct their elections completely by mail; and
- WHEREAS:** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which dictates the City of Boston's election policies and procedures, has already begun implementing voting reform measures such as early voting for certain elections; and
- WHEREAS:** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which does not currently allow for no-excuse absentee voting, has accepted recommendations to classify absence at your polling location as a precautionary measure in response to COVID-19 as an allowed qualification for a mail-in ballot; and
- WHEREAS:** The City of Boston has at least two elections slated for the fall of 2020: the state primary election on September 1st & the state election on November 3rd; and
- WHEREAS:** The City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can further our commitment to the health and safety of residents by taking all of the necessary and thoughtful steps now as it relates to our upcoming elections; and
- WHEREAS:** To prevent the continued spread and/or recurrence of COVID-19, the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should plan for increased absentee ballot requests, increased polling location staffing levels, and potentially the implementation and management of an emergency all vote-by-mail election; **THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to explore preparation for the upcoming 2020 elections in September and November, including the feasibility of an all vote-by-mail election due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that representatives from the Secretary of State's office, the Boston Elections Department, other relevant State and City departments, voting advocacy organizations, and members of the public be invited to testify.