

Offered by City Councilor Julia Mejia, Murphy, Fernandez Anderson, Arroyo, Breadon, Bok, Edwards, Flaherty, Lara, Louijeune, Worrell and Flynn



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDER FOR A HEARING ON ESTABLISHING A MENTAL
HEALTH CURRICULUM IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

- WHEREAS,** The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and Children’s Hospital Association have declared a national emergency in children’s mental health, citing the serious toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on top of existing challenges; *and*
- WHEREAS,** A study published in 2021 found that, between 2012 and 2018, diagnoses of mental illnesses amongst children aged 4-17 increased 34.6%, with attention deficit/hyperactivity, conduct disorders, anxiety, and depression were the most common conditions, while eating disorders, anxiety, and depression presented the greatest increases at 96%, 95%, and 73% respectively; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Despite such high prevalence, according to Active Minds 67% of people 18-24 with anxiety or depression don't seek treatment, and suicide remains one of the top five major causes of death for children and young adults aged 12-19 according to the CDC; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Boston Public Schools currently houses a Department of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), which employs a number of school psychologists and social workers, describes their services as providing direct individual student services like counseling and assessment, in addition to serving on the district crisis team, responsible for supporting school communities following large impact crises; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Thanks to the work of dedicated advocates across the city, Boston has recently made the push to secure a nurse in every school and to provide adequate access to social services and school psychologist, but these are services that are often provided outside of the classroom and are not incorporated into the general curriculum; *and*
- WHEREAS,** While schools across the country and in Boston emphasize the teaching of physical health, nutritional health, and sexual health, very few have substantively incorporated mental health as a part of their curriculum; *and*

WHEREAS, A poll conducted by the National Alliance on Mental Illness found that 87% of respondents support mental health education in schools, and 70% support mental health days for students; *and*

WHEREAS, In California, Senate Bill No. 224 requires each school district, county office of education, state special school, and charter school that offers one or more courses in health education to pupils in middle school or high school to include in those courses instruction in mental health that meets the requirements of the bill, as specified.; *and*

WHEREAS, Similar bills have been proposed in states across the United States, but the proposal still remains uncommon; *and*

WHEREAS, Recent events in and around Boston Public Schools, including the shooting of a 17 year-old student and a teacher outside of TechBoston, have made it clear that there is a serious need to address mental health and wellness in a more substantial and productive way; *and*

WHEREAS, The Boston City Council and Boston Public Schools has an obligation to ensure that our students are nurtured, cared for, and set up for success in all aspects of health, including mental health; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED:

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing regarding the establishment of a mental health curriculum in Boston Public Schools. Representatives from the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, Boston Public Health Commission, the Boston Teachers Union, BEJA, New Generations and Associates, youth leaders, members of the public, and any other interested parties shall be invited and are encouraged to attend.

Filed in Council: April 6, 2022