

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE CITY OF BOSTON MAYOR'S OFFICE

A Hearing with "Sanctuary City" Mayors

Before the

***COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***

WASHINGTON, D.C.

March 5, 2025

I. Introduction

Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Connolly, and members of the Committee, on behalf of the City of Boston, I am grateful for this opportunity to share with our federal partners the work that we have done on the local level to make Boston the safest major city in America.

Boston was founded in 1630.¹ More than 100 years later, in April of 1775, Paul Revere—the son of French immigrant Apollos Rivoire—rode on horseback from the Boston neighborhood of Charlestown to Lexington, Massachusetts to alert American patriots that British troops were on the move.² Revere’s ride is remembered as the opening act of the American Revolution—the struggle for liberty and self-determination that continues to animate Boston’s spirit and character to this day.

Since then, Boston has established itself as New England’s heart, brain, soul, and muscle: founding New England’s first hospital,³ our nation’s first newspaper,⁴ first public school,⁵ public library,⁶ subway system,⁷ and city police department.⁸ Boston steadily became America’s epicenter of innovation, the testing ground for new ideas and social movements, and a haven for people of all cultures and backgrounds—roles Boston remains proud to play to this day.

II. Boston is the Safest Major City in America

Boston has always been a city of immigrants.

From the first English settlers escaping religious persecution and the Irish forced out by famine, to the Chinese, Italian, and Jewish workers who built our city’s industry, to the families from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Colombia, Honduras, Cape Verde, Somalia, China,

¹ City of Boston Archives, Town of Boston records (May 12, 2008)

<https://archives.boston.gov/repositories/2/resources/10>

² National Park Service, “Paul Revere.” (January 9, 2024) <https://www.nps.gov/people/paul-revere.htm>

³ Tufts Medicine, “History of Tufts Medical Center”

<https://www.tuftsmedicine.org/get-care/our-locations/about-tufts-medical-center/history-tufts-medical-center>

⁴ Smithsonian Magazine, “Why the Debut Issue of America’s First Newspaper Was Also the Publication’s Last.” (September 25, 2024)

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/why-debut-issue-americas-first-newspaper-also-publications-last-180985122/>

⁵ National Geographic, “Apr 23, 1635 CE: First Public School in America.”

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/first-public-school-america/>

⁶ Boston Public Library, “BPL History.” <https://www.bpl.org/bpl-history/>

⁷ Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, “The History of the T.” <https://www.mbta.com/history>

⁸ TIME, “How the U.S. Got Its Police Force” (May 18, 2017) <https://time.com/4779112/police-history-origins/>

India, Korea, Vietnam, and so many more that have come to call Boston home—we pride ourselves on our legacy of welcoming the world to our shores.^{9,10}

Today, more than 700,000 people call Boston home.¹¹ Approximately 28% of our residents were born in a country other than the United States.¹² Our Boston Public Schools students hail from 139 different countries and speak 88 languages.¹³ Our immigrant residents and communities are part of the fabric of Boston. They are our family, our neighbors, and friends.

As Mayor of Boston, my job is to make our city a home for everyone—a goal that requires a foundation of safety and trust. Our approach focuses on building and deepening relationships in all of our neighborhoods, engaging community leaders, investing in public safety and public health, and collaborating with partners at every level of government.

Since I was sworn in as mayor in 2021, Boston has set new record lows for violence each year. Over the last two years Boston’s number of homicides decreased by 40%.¹⁴ In 2024, Boston recorded 24 homicides total—down from 40 in 2021, and the lowest number since at least 1957,¹⁵ the first year for which there is reliable data. The number of non-fatal shooting victims has decreased by 25% over the last three years.¹⁶

Overall, incidents of gunfire in the city have declined 16% compared to 2023 and are down 37% when compared to the five-year average.¹⁷ The number of incidents of gunfire in the city in 2024 is the lowest number Boston has seen in the last ten years.¹⁸ Last year was also the fourth consecutive year that Boston has recorded a decline in the number of shooting victims and shooting incidents.¹⁹

⁹ Global Boston, “Eras of Migration.” <https://globalboston.bc.edu/index.php/home/eras-of-migration/>

¹⁰ National Park Service, “Boston: An Underground Railroad Hub.”

<https://www.nps.gov/boaf/learn/historyculture/boston-an-underground-railroad-hub.htm>

¹¹ City of Boston Planning Department Research Division, Boston in Context: Neighborhoods

<https://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/45b1d52a-e762-42a4-b81d-d52072bfda61>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ BPS Welcome Services Data, School Year 2024-2025.

¹⁴ Boston Regional Intelligence Center, “All Districts Part One Crime 10 Year Overview.”

<https://content.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2025/03/2024%20Data%20-%20Citywide%20Year%20End%2010%20Year%20Review.pdf>

¹⁵ Boston.com, “The city has never been safer’: Boston records lowest murder rate since 1957, officials announce (December 29, 2024)

<https://www.boston.com/news/crime/2024/12/29/the-city-has-never-been-safer-boston-records-lowest-murder-rate-since-1957-officials-announce/>

¹⁶ Boston Regional Intelligence Center, “All Districts Part One Crime 10 Year Overview.”

<https://content.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2025/03/2024%20Data%20-%20Citywide%20Year%20End%2010%20Year%20Review.pdf>

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

And Boston’s track record on public safety is not limited to violent crime. Residential burglaries are down 11% in the last two years and have fallen 67% over the last decade,²⁰ and the rate of motor vehicle theft over the last two years is at its lowest point in recent history—42% lower than a decade ago.²¹

Of course, any life lost, harmed, or otherwise impacted by violence and crime is one life too many. And our vision for Boston is not just one where we *reduce* violence and criminal activity—it is a city where *every* resident is safe; where every family has access to resources and opportunities in the affirmative.

It is not a coincidence that our record low crime rates overlap with record investments in the programs and policies that cultivate prosperity for the residents of our city.

Last summer, we guaranteed a paid summer job to every young person in Boston who wanted one—more than doubling the number of participants from just three years ago.²² When we tap into Boston’s anchor institutions to empower our students, we reduce youth violence and set young people up for personal and professional success.

We have spurred Boston’s largest-ever expansion of high-quality pre-kindergarten, nearly doubling the number of early childhood education classrooms in community-based settings to serve more than 1,500 three- and four-year-olds²³—giving families of all economic backgrounds a great start for their littlest learners at no cost.

We have seen the biggest buildout of college and career pathways in the Boston Public Schools in history, more than quadrupling the number of students participating in early college programs²⁴—increasing their chances of graduating from high school and enrolling in a degree program.²⁵

We are investing in housing stability and economic opportunity across all of our neighborhoods: Between 2022 and 2024, we saw the highest three-year total of new income-restricted units built

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² City of Boston Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity, Summer 2024 Impact Report (November 2024). https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2024/11/Summer%202024%20Impact%20Report_0.pdf

²³ Boston Public Schools, About Boston Pre-K, <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/students-families/universal-pre-k-boston/about>

²⁴ Boston Public Schools presentation to the Boston School Committee, “SY25-26 Long-Term Facilities Plan Recommendations.” (January 22, 2025) <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1737143025/bostonpublicschoolsorg/wkxarjp5fhnx0gzf4gpz/CapitalPlanning2025PPT.pdf>

²⁵ MassInc, New data shows Early College is delivering as promised for Massachusetts (January 2023) <https://massincmain.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Early-College-Impact-Brief-January-23.pdf>

in 25 years;²⁶ we added nearly 58,000 new jobs to Boston’s economy; and helped more than 700 new businesses open their doors.²⁷ These investments are an integral component of our approach to public safety—maximizing access to opportunities and resources for every resident and family and making our city the best place in the country to raise a family.

Led by Commissioner Michael Cox, the Boston Police Department (BPD) is the nation’s leader in community policing. Our officers work hand-in-hand with the City’s Community Safety team²⁸ and alongside faith leaders, parents, teachers, coaches, neighborhood groups, and public health providers to tackle the root causes of criminal behavior. BPD holds Community CompStat meetings across all of our neighborhoods, bringing police officers and community members together to discuss crime data, community concerns, and collaborative solutions to implement in partnership with our residents.²⁹ We center the lived experiences of those most impacted by violence in our policy and planning, and leverage the most advanced data-driven approach to engage individuals at high risk of criminal involvement and connect them with high-quality services and supports.

Community safety is the cornerstone of our efforts to make Boston a home for everyone. And our approach to public safety is working. We are the safest major city in the country³⁰ because our officers have built relationships in our communities over decades—and because *all* of our residents trust that they can call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency or to report a crime.

III. Boston Collaborates with State and Federal Law Enforcement

BPD is sworn to uphold the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the municipal code of the City of Boston. In 2014 and again in 2019, as a member of the Boston City Council, I was proud to vote for the Boston Trust Act—outlining BPD’s authority to collaborate with all levels of law enforcement to enforce the criminal laws of Massachusetts.³¹ This authority, and its limitations, were reinforced by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in *Lunn v.*

²⁶ City of Boston, Housing Initiatives Under Mayor Michelle Wu (February 13, 2025)

<https://www.boston.gov/departments/housing/housing-initiatives-under-mayor-michelle-wu/>

²⁷ MA Department of Economic Research, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

²⁸ City of Boston, “Community Safety.” <https://www.boston.gov/departments/community-safety>

²⁹ Boston Police Department, “BPD In The Community: Boston Police Department’s Dedication to Community Policing Shines in East Boston during A7 District’s Community Compstat.” (February 2, 2024)

<https://police.boston.gov/2024/02/02/bpd-in-the-community-boston-police-departments-dedication-to-community-policing-shines-in-east-boston-during-a7-districts-community-compstat/>

³⁰ Major Cities Chiefs Association. “Violent Crime Survey – National Totals, Year-End Comparison, January 1 to December 31, 2024, and 2023.” (February 2025)

<https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MCCA-Violent-Crime-Report-2024-and-2023-Year-End.pdf>

³¹ City of Boston Municipal Code 11-1.9 Boston Trust Act.

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/boston/latest/boston_ma/0-0-0-7416

Commonwealth: In Massachusetts, law enforcement agencies may not detain people solely for alleged civil immigration violations.³²

Our officers uphold the law. When it comes to criminal matters, the Boston Police collaborate with our state and federal law enforcement partners every day. If an individual has a criminal warrant, regardless of their immigration status, BPD enforces that warrant and assists our state and federal law enforcement partners in holding that person accountable through the criminal justice process.

This constant collaboration with state and federal law enforcement is a crucial part of making Boston the safest major city in the country. Several examples from the past year alone illustrate this point:

In February 2024, the Boston Police Department, alongside law enforcement personnel from ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), U.S. Marshals Service (USMS), and other federal partners, conducted an operation to arrest and charge more than 40 members and associates of the Heath Street Gang with racketeering conspiracy, drug trafficking, firearm offenses, wire fraud, and financial fraud.³³ The operation followed a two-year-long investigation into gang violence in Boston, in collaboration with state and federal law enforcement agencies.

In June 2024, Boston Police officers worked alongside the USMS and the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) to execute a federal warrant against a juvenile in Boston wanted in Turkey for involuntary manslaughter and injury and an adult foreign national for protecting the offender.³⁴

In August 2024, following a multi-year investigation, the Boston Police worked with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), ATF, U.S. Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and MSP to arrest and charge six members and associates of the H Block Gang for drug conspiracy, and charge four additional H Block members who were already in state custody.³⁵

³² *Lunn v. Commonwealth*, 477 Mass. 517 (2017)

³³ U.S. Attorney's Office, "District of Massachusetts, Heath Street Gang Members and Associates Charged in Federal Sweep." (February 14, 2024)

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/heath-street-gang-members-and-associates-charged-federal-sweep>

³⁴ Boston Police Department, "Boston Police Fugitive Unit Arrests Two in Jamaica Plain on Federal Extradition Warrants Out of Turkey" (June 14, 2024)

<https://police.boston.gov/2024/06/14/boston-police-fugitive-unit-arrests-two-in-jamaica-plain-on-federal-extradition-warrants-out-of-turkey/>

³⁵ U.S. Attorney's Office, "District of Massachusetts, Nineteen Gang Members and Associates Charged in Federal Sweeps Targeting Boston Gangs." (August 29, 2024)

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/nineteen-gang-members-and-associates-charged-federal-sweeps-targeting-boston-gangs>

And in February of 2025, an ICE HSI-led task force arrested eight alleged members of the Trinitarios Gang—a violent transnational criminal organization—charging them with federal offenses including racketeering conspiracy in connection with six murders and 11 attempted murders, following an investigation involving the FBI, MSP, the Essex District Attorney’s Office, and the Boston Police Department, as well as law enforcement agencies from across New England.³⁶

These collective efforts are essential to ensuring that violent offenders in Boston are held accountable for their actions and that all residents are safe from violent crime. In every instance where an individual has broken—or is plotting to break—federal criminal law, Boston Police work hand-in-hand with federal law enforcement to keep our residents safe.

If you commit a crime in Boston, regardless of your immigration status, you will be held accountable. And if you are a violent criminal, you have no place in our community. But without a criminal warrant, BPD has no authority to detain an individual if the court system orders them released.³⁷ In Massachusetts, bail is determined by state judges and court officials; Boston Police do not make release decisions.

As Mayor of Boston, my job is to ensure we are using our public safety resources wisely—to strengthen the partnerships that are necessary to prevent, respond to, and solve crime, and to hold criminals accountable for their actions. My budgets have invested in more resources for our police department and other first responders, and I have vetoed proposed budget cuts to our public safety agencies.³⁸

My administration launched the inaugural Boston Fire Department Cadet program³⁹ and grew the size of the BPD Cadet class by 50%.⁴⁰ We negotiated a historic agreement with the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association—whose officers voted overwhelmingly to hold themselves accountable to the highest standards of community policing—enacting cost of living adjustments and significant, common-sense reforms in discipline, paid details, medical leave, officer retention,

³⁶ U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. “ICE investigation leads to 8 criminal arrests and charges for Trinitarios gang members.” (February 19, 2025)

<https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/ice-investigation-leads-8-criminal-arrests-and-charges-trinitarios-gang-members>

³⁷ *Lunn v. Commonwealth*, 477 Mass. 517 (2017)

³⁸ The Boston Globe, “Mayor Michelle Wu vetoes changes to police, fire budgets made by City Council, frustrating some members” (June 10, 2024)

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/06/10/metro/mayor-michelle-wu-intends-veto-changes-police-fire-budgets-made-by-city-council/>

³⁹ City of Boston, “Inaugural Boston Fire Cadet Class Celebrated” (May 4, 2023)

<https://content.boston.gov/news/inaugural-boston-fire-cadet-class-celebrated>

⁴⁰ ACLU of Massachusetts. “Analyzing Mayor Wu’s FY24 Boston Police Department Budget Recommendation.” (May 5, 2023)

<https://data.aclum.org/2023/05/05/analyzing-fy24-boston-police-department-budget-recommendation/>

and educational incentives.⁴¹ And we have invested in the recruitment and retention of 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers to give every Boston resident the confidence that when they need help, the City of Boston will be there for them.⁴²

IV. In Boston, Community Trust is the Cornerstone of Community Safety

Over the last month, I have met with residents, nonprofit leaders, business owners and faith leaders in community centers, main streets, and places of worship, from East Boston to Mattapan, asking my constituents what they want Congress to know.⁴³ Across the City, what I heard overwhelmingly from residents was fear and frustration. Neighbors are afraid to report crimes in their communities, and social workers can no longer convince victims of domestic violence to call the police and seek help.

A city that is scared is not a city that is safe. A land ruled by fear is not the land of the free.

Next month our city will kick off festivities celebrating the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. We are a city where justice and democracy are not just preached but practiced, where tyranny has and always will be defeated. We are a city where a group of immigrants fleeing persecution built a home based on the belief that they could make a better life for the people they love.⁴⁴

The fabric of Boston's long history is made richer and brighter by the stories of those who came to our city in search of a safe place to call home. We are the safest major city in the nation. We are home to the greatest healthcare institutions, the greatest colleges and universities, and the most advanced innovators in the world. We are the cradle of democracy and the city of champions.

We are all these things not in spite of our immigrant communities, but because of them. One in seven signers of the Declaration of Independence were immigrants.⁴⁵ On the last four Red Sox

⁴¹ City of Boston, Five-year Contract Ratified by Boston Police Patrolmen's Association (December 5, 2023) <https://www.boston.gov/news/five-year-contract-ratified-boston-police-patrolmens-association>

⁴² SEIU Local 888, "Mayor Wu Signs Executive Order Supporting 911 Dispatchers." (April 19, 2023) <https://www.seiu888.org/2023/04/19/mayor-wu-signs-executive-order-supporting-911-dispatchers/>

⁴³ Dorchester Reporter, "Wu huddles with clergy, activists ahead of session with Congress." (February 26, 2025) <https://www.dotnews.com/2025/wu-huddles-clergy-activists-ahead-session-congress>

⁴⁴ The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, John Winthrop describes life in Boston, 1634 <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/john-winthrop-describes-life-boston-1634>

⁴⁵ Harvard University, "Declaration Resources Project." <https://declaration.fas.harvard.edu/faq/how-many-signers-were-born-american-colonies>

rosters to win a World Series, one in five were immigrants.⁴⁶ Of all the Boston University faculty to have earned the Nobel Prize, all but one were immigrants.⁴⁷

V. Conclusion

Today, one in four Boston residents were born outside of the United States.⁴⁸ One in three speaks a language other than English at home.⁴⁹ Our immigrant neighbors run, work, and shop at our businesses and study in our schools. They swim and play pick-up basketball at our Boston Centers for Youth and Families, push their kids on the swings in our playgrounds, and walk with their grandparents on the paths through our parks. All of them chose this country, and chose Boston, as home, because they believed in the American Dream—that no matter where you are from, if you pitch in, look out for your neighbors, and cheer for the home team, you can build a better future here for the people you love.

As Mayor, I will never stop working to make Boston a city where all of our residents have every opportunity to realize that dream. We are the safest major city in America because we are safe *for everyone*—that will never change. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our partners at every level of government on policies that will keep all the residents and families in our country safe from harm and free from fear.

⁴⁶ Baseball Reference, Boston Red Sox Statistics – 2004, 2007, 2013, 2018.

<https://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/BOS/>

⁴⁷ Boston University, Nobel Laureates

<https://www.bu.edu/provost/awards-publications/national-awards-and-distinctions/nobel-laureates/>

⁴⁸ City of Boston Planning Department Research Division, “Boston in Context: Neighborhoods.” (January 1, 2024)

<https://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/45b1d52a-e762-42a4-b81d-d52072bfda61>

⁴⁹ *Id.*