



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
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October 26, 2022

The Honorable Michelle Wu
Mayor
City of Boston
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mayor Wu,

As you know, since June 2021, the Baker-Polito Administration has provided and continues to provide leadership and ongoing support to the City of Boston's efforts to address the humanitarian crisis at Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue (Mass and Cass). The Commonwealth, through funding appropriated by the Legislature, has to date invested over \$40 million to address the crisis, ranging from harm reduction, low-threshold housing and shelters, outreach programs and clinical treatment services, and last week released a new statewide \$10 million procurement to establish temporary low-threshold housing for homeless and housing unstable individuals with substance use disorder.

The vast majority of these initiatives have been conducted in close partnership with City staff including the Mayor's Office of Health and Human Services, the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Boston Public Health Commission, and Office of Recovery Services. The Commonwealth also provides direct funding to support City efforts including the City's engagement center and syringe cleanup programs. As the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and our Departments of Public Health and Mental Health, have been working so closely with the City on these efforts, it was surprising to hear your comments at a press conference last week and reiterated again on a radio program this week that the City is seeking a "partnership" with the state. Until the city disbanded its regular coordinating meeting on Mass and Cass in September, key staff from my office and the Department of Public Health were active participants.

It is also important to clarify that of the 200 temporary low-threshold beds that the city purports to have stood up, 95 of those beds were in fact initiated by and directly funded by the Commonwealth with three providers – Pine Street Inn, Victory Programs, and Commonwealth Care Alliance. The balance was stood up by the city, including at the Roundhouse. This Administration has been actively expanding both temporary low-threshold housing and shelter sites as well as permanent low-threshold housing across the state, including in Boston. As recently as last week, my staff reviewed with your staff a new \$10 million request for proposal (RFP) to expand temporary low-threshold housing statewide before the public issuance to ensure that we were in close coordination and communication. As the City is aware, this will add another 150 to 200 temporary low-threshold beds to meet the needs of individuals with substance use disorder and who are homeless.



The state's recent investments in temporary and permanent low-threshold housing for homeless or housing unstable individuals with substance use disorder include:

- \$15 million to develop and operate 3 temporary low-threshold housing and shelter programs, including: Pine Street Inn, the Cottages (operated by Commonwealth Care Alliance and Eliot Community Human Services), and the Envision Hotel (operated by Victory Programs), for individuals from the area of Mass and Cass. To date, these programs have served over 180 individuals, of which 65 individuals have transitioned into long-term permanent supportive housing.
- \$33.6 million for 380 permanent low-threshold housing units statewide by end of FY23.
 - Of which 70 units have been dedicated to and filled by individuals from the Mass and Cass area.
- An additional \$5 million for 191 permanent low-threshold housing units in Boston coming in FY23 and FY24.

These temporary and permanent low-threshold housing units for homeless or housing unstable individuals with substance use disorder that have been developed or are under active development will yield between 816 and 866 additional capacity.

Additional state funding to support and address issues impacting the Mass and Cass area include:

- \$475K to ensure timely access to Acute Treatment Services (detoxification) for individuals referred through outreach and other referral sources serving individuals from Mass and Cass.
- \$5 million to support the City's street outreach and opioid-related programs, including at the Pine Street Inn, Boston Medical Center, and the Suffolk County House of Correction.
- \$2.3 million for recovery-based reentry services for Black and Latino men including \$460,000 annually to two organizations, Casa Esperanza and Father's UpLift in Boston's Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods.
- \$300K to fund peer outreach workers to engage young women with substance use disorder at risk of trafficking and HIV.
- \$750K to the Boston Syringe Service Program for needle exchange, testing services, and wound care.
- \$750K to the Boston Public Health Commission for outreach and syringe pickup.
- \$377K to the Boston Public Health Commission to support the Engagement Center at Mass and Cass.
- \$350K to the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program for implementation of a Mobile Addiction Services program.
- \$1.75 million to the Boston Medical Center for three Office-Based Opioid Treatment (OBOT) Enhanced programs targeting youth, young adults, pregnant and post-partum women, and people who use stimulants.
- \$850K to BMC and the Boston Public Health Commission for the Opioid Urgent Care Center's Faster Paths to Treatment and Project ASSERT programs.
- \$350K to the Suffolk County House of Correction for expansion and provisions of access to Medication for Opioid Use Disorder and other evidence-based treatment for individuals with substance use disorder who are involved with the criminal justice system.
- \$300K to Comprehensive Treatment Centers (CTC) Acadia for counseling and Medication for Opioid Use Disorder, to help adults achieve successful long-term recovery from opioid addiction.

In August, Governor Baker filed a request for \$20 million to expand additional regional low-threshold housing for homeless or housing unstable individuals with substance use disorder. This funding remains pending before the Legislature, and the City is urged to join us in advocating for its swift passage.

My office has also shared the blueprint that we developed to implement the Cottage Community at Shattuck with the City as well as with other municipalities. This cottage community was the first to be

developed in the Northeast and is an innovative model that can be replicated and funded by the City of Boston.

The Administration has been and continues to be a very willing partner in this crisis, but at this point, more work must be done by the City of Boston, including leveraging the nearly \$5M of the \$18M anticipated in opioid settlement funds to build trust and help people receive the housing, care, and support to find the pathway to recovery.

This humanitarian crisis that exists in the area is exacerbated by individuals preying upon vulnerable people and we urge you to pursue criminal investigations and community policing efforts, so everyone's rights are protected.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marylou Sudders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marylou Sudders