

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR MICHELLE WU, Linehan, Zakim, O'Malley, Ciommo, McCarthy,
LaMattina, Campbell, Pressley, Baker, Jackson and Flaherty
CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL



**AN ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING
REPRECINCTING IN THE CITY OF BOSTON**

WHEREAS: Equal access to voting is a pillar of American democracy and the City of Boston has a responsibility to ensure that its residents have that access; and

WHEREAS: While Boston's population has grown and shifted across neighborhoods, the boundaries of the city's 255 precincts within 22 wards have not been adjusted since the 1920's, resulting in a wide range of precinct sizes; with precinct-level turnout in the 2012 Presidential Election ranging from under 400 voters in the smallest precincts to well over 2,000 voters in the largest precincts; and

WHEREAS: This results in unnecessary barriers to voting at the largest precincts, including long lines and wait times at some voting locations; and

WHEREAS: Members of the Boston City Council and the body as a whole have advocated for reprecincting to address these barriers over many years; and

WHEREAS: Early voting was extremely successful in the 2016 Presidential Election, with participation from over 47,000 voters, but the largest precincts still experienced long lines on Election Day, and by state law, early voting will not be available in the upcoming Municipal Election; and

WHEREAS: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, under Section 1 of Chapter 54, requires that cities and towns make a new division of their wards and precincts after each decennial census, but the City of Boston is exempt from the state's mandated decennial re-division of precincts and wards; and

WHEREAS: The City of Boston may undertake reprecincting separate from the decennial statewide efforts and in time for the 2017 Municipal Elections through a special law that would divide the largest precincts into smaller units without changing ward lines or political district lines; and

WHEREAS: Dividing precincts into smaller, more equal sizes will facilitate a more flexible redistricting process after the next census; *NOW,*

THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss plans for reprecincting in the City of Boston prior to the 2017 Municipal Elections, and that representatives from the Elections Department, and other interested parties and members of the public be invited to testify.

Filed: November 16, 2016