



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS INTERNET ACCESS AND DIGITAL
EQUITY IN THE CITY OF BOSTON**

WHEREAS: Being able to access the internet is now an indispensable part of life, education, and work, and having reliable and high-speed internet access is even more critical now as school, events, and businesses have to transition to using online services during the COVID-19 pandemic; *and*

WHEREAS: The City has partnered with Verizon to expand its fiber-optic network to offer high speed broadband internet service to the entire city. However, some areas of the City are still currently underserved in terms of internet access, and still have lack of choices in choosing an affordable and reliable internet service provider; *and*

WHEREAS: Internet service can be expensive, and having a lack of competition in terms of internet service providers can make it difficult for families to find affordable internet service and negotiate a better rate. This issue is particularly critical now as we become more reliant on internet services with the ongoing pandemic, and many families are seeing financial loss due to job losses because of COVID-19; *and*

WHEREAS: Access to computers and having digital skills are also important not only because more opportunities are now online, but it is important now especially with the ongoing pandemic, and the likelihood that schools, employment, and other activities will continue to be online; *and*

WHEREAS: Lack of access to affordable internet services and computers, as well as the lack of knowledge of digital skills are impacting our working class families, immigrants, communities of color, and seniors the most; *and*

WHEREAS: Aside from working to expand fiber-optics network to all neighborhoods, the city also has a Digital Equity Fund that support programs in organizations such as Tech Goes Home that seek to advance digital equity; *and*

WHEREAS: Some communities are also exploring the idea of municipal broadband, where local governments invest and build their own internet infrastructure. There are more than 900 communities across the U.S. where internet service is served from some form of municipal network or by a cooperative, including cities like Chattanooga, TN, and Lafayette, LA; *and*

WHEREAS: As we continue to discuss how we operate during the pandemic and post-pandemic, internet access and digital equity must be part of the conversation, and we should ensure that residents have equal access to internet and digital services, and that there are resources in place to assist families who need help in accessing internet and digital services; *and*

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss resources and strategies for internet access and digital equity in the City of Boston. Representatives from the Department of Innovation and Technology, internet service providers, organizations working on digital equity, as well as other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.