

Offered by Councilor Garrison



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE STATE OF HOMELESS VETERANS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) maintains that roughly 11% of the overall adult homeless population are veterans and 58,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and twice as many experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year; and,

WHEREAS, Homeless veterans tend to be male (91%), single (98%), live in a city (76%), have a mental and/or physical disability (54%), and are black (39%); and

WHEREAS, While there are many factors that influence all homelessness in Boston, such as the scarcity of real affordable housing, a minimum wage under \$15 an hour and not enough access to quality health care, a large number of displaced and vulnerable veterans live with the negative effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse issues, which are often exacerbated by a lack of family and social support networks; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 1.4 million other veterans are considered to be at risk of homelessness due to poverty, lack of support networks, and substandard living conditions in either overcrowded or dismal housing situations; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans suffer from physical and mental health conditions that make it difficult to find and maintain gainful employment and to thus pay for housing, and military occupational specialties and military training are not always transferable to the civilian workforce, placing some veterans at a severe disadvantage when looking for employment; and

WHEREAS, Along with veterans who have mental health or substance abuse problems, veterans without financial means or who do not have family members that they can turn to for assistance often find themselves homeless and on the street; and

WHEREAS, Because of their service in the Armed Forces, veterans are at higher risk of experiencing traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and PTSD, both of which have been found to be among the most substantial risk factors for homelessness; and

WHEREAS, While the VA has spent many years trying to address veteran homelessness, it remains to be seen how effective their programs have been, especially given the number of veterans living on the street in Boston right now; and

WHEREAS, The City of Boston has a social responsibility to ensure that our veterans receive the care and benefits they have rightfully earned in their service to our country, and to create a welcoming and safe home for them to return to; and *NOW*

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss the state of veteran homelessness in Boston and how to better connect veterans to support services and care. Representatives from the City of Boston and other interested parties shall be invited to attend.

Filed in Council: March 1, 2019