

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR TANIA FERNANDES ANDERSON AND COUNCILOR BRIAN WORRELL



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING TO FACILITATE A COMMUNITY PROCESS TO SUPPORT CONSUMERS IN DISTRICT 7 IMPACTED BY THE IMPENDING CLOSURE OF WALGREENS AT 416 WARREN STREET

**WHEREAS,** In November 2022, upon learning of the impending closure of multiple Walgreens storefronts across the City, I filed a Resolution calling for Walgreens to postpone closing any more locations in Boston; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Walgreens proceeded to close three Boston area locations in Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park—all predominantly Black, Brown, and working-class communities; *and*

**WHEREAS,** On December 14th, 2023, Walgreens announced a prospective closure of their Warren St. location just one year after these closures; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Walgreens has announced this closings without offering alternatives for how those impacted will be able to access their medicines; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Walgreens has plans to close 150 locations in the United States by August 31st, 2024. Currently, they have 145 locations in the State of MA, with 30 stores in the Greater Boston region; *and*

**WHEREAS,** An urban pharmacy desert is defined as a low income community or neighborhood with no pharmacy within ½ mile for those with limited vehicle access; *and*

**WHEREAS,** If most people who live in an urban neighborhood do not have access to a pharmacy within 1 mile of their home, that in turn, constitutes a pharmacy desert; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Pharmacy deserts can have a plethora of negative impacts on communities, especially during medication shortages, as consumers may go without medicines, or have extremely difficult commutes to access their medicines, as well as losing a valuable resource for groceries and other essential items that the absconding store once provided; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Since COVID, pharmacies across the Country have dealt with medication shortages, forcing consumers to utilize multiple pharmacies in their neighborhood to obtain their medication; *and*

**WHEREAS,** In District 7, there are seven pharmacies, four of which are large chain pharmacies, while three are local smaller businesses; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The average distance between the closest of each pharmacy is around .7 miles, while the furthest is 1.2 miles with some routes requiring individuals to take multiple forms of public transportation; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Roxbury is predominantly a working-class community, which means that many of the residents in the area are low income, do not have access to a car, and hence, will have significant challenged getting to pharmacies at greater distances; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Elderly community members, many of whom have mobility issues and are on a fixed income, rely on having a pharmacy within close confines of their environs, potentially leading to significant personal and public health issues interconnected with, and exacerbated by, issues of racism, ageism, and class inequality; *and*

**WHEREAS,** In 2023 the Boston Public health Commission published a Provisional Mortality Life Expectancy Report and found “For 2017-2021 combined, the neighborhoods with the highest age-adjusted premature mortality rates were Dorchester (02121, 02125) (293.9), Dorchester (02122, 02124) (289.5) and Roxbury (282.9). These rates were twice that of the lowest rates observed in Back Bay (140.3) and Roslindale (142.4)”; *and*

**WHEREAS,** The World Health Organization defines premature mortality rate as “the unconditional probability of death between ages 30 and 70 years from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases”; *and*

**WHEREAS,** On January 2, 2024 I held a robust community listening session regarding the matter with nearly 90 engaged constituents in attendance, where they spoke of being blindsided by the closure and gave voice to their frustrations over what many consider to be yet another example of unmitigated corporate greed, systemic racism, and feeling that they are not being offered sufficient space to be heard and to influence the process; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Impacted community members seek a guarantee that no more nearby Walgreens locations will close in the foreseeable future, such as the location at 1890 Columbus Ave and expressed that a store that provides vital and essential services to a community should agree to pay 20 months of rent if they are to vacate the premises; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Said policy would be instituted by the Stop & Shop in Grove Hall if they were to abscond and is often referred to as a “go dark clause” which, while allowing the tenant to vacate a location, does ensure that the tenant continues to pay its rent

and meets its various other obligations; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Additionally, constituents relayed that there were notices on the doors of the 416 Warren location, informing them that the store was closing on the Dr Martin Luther King federal Holiday, occurring on January 15th, 2024, though since postponed to the end of January; *and*

**WHEREAS,** This proverbial insult to injury is a tone deaf, arguably racist action which is likely to further the ill will and resentment already simmering from the closing itself ; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Profitable corporations that benefit from access to Boston's communities have a responsibility to our communities and must ensure that the masses of poor and working people impacted by store closures are accounted for and that their needs are catered to; *and*

**WHEREAS,** Finally, those in attendance at said session were vociferous in their view that there should be a funding mechanism, via the community, so that a community pharmacy could be established as an alternative to these ongoing closures; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**ORDERED:** That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing and invite the Boston Public Health Commission and other appropriate members of the Administration along with community stakeholders to discuss focusing resources in D7 with respect to health care & access equity in light of the aforementioned closures.

Filed on: January 24, 2024