



MELROSE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Melrose Human Rights Commission FY25 Budget Memo

History of the Melrose Human Rights Commission:

The Melrose Human Rights Commission is one of the oldest community HRCs in the Commonwealth. This Commission was created in 1992 upon recognizing a clear and apparent need in our community. For over 30 years, our commission has worked to strengthen the local bonds in our City, fostering and cultivating a mutual respect and understanding of all viewpoints, while verifying for all observers the enriching nature a diverse population brings with it.

Our essential mission is two-fold: (1) working to safeguard and advocate for our legal and social rights; and, (2) helping our community to progress and transform individually and in our collective relations.

Our work includes:

- working to promote good will, understanding of diverse cultures, and awareness of human rights issues
- investigating claims of unlawful discrimination or harassment, and either mediating where appropriate or referring claims to appropriate enforcement authorities, and
- building and sustaining community relationships and partnerships.

Some examples of our work in the last year are:

- Revisiting and continuing to work to restructure the Melrose Human Rights Commission so that our work aligns with our city charter to uphold the human rights of all persons in Melrose and the free exercise and enjoyment of any rights and privileges secured by the Constitutions and laws of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Hosting *Community Connection Meet-Ups* where Melrose Human Rights commissioners met with members of the community to forge partnerships with local organizations and groups and entrust them with the primary responsibility of hosting community events such as the Community Iftar Dinner, Melrose Pride, and MLK Day of Service. This strategic decision was made to empower these organizations as well as guarantee the authenticity and sincerity of these events dedicated to recognizing and celebrating a variety of groups within our community.
- Assessing the current human rights needs of our community and establishing a mission, purpose, vision, and values that guide the Melrose Human Rights Commission forward based on the current human rights needs and charter guidance.

- Continuing to build and sustain community relationships and partnerships by increasing our community outreach through the HRC HUB, which is a quarterly newsletter to keep the Melrose community informed on the happenings of the Melrose Human Rights Commission, provide educational resources, and draw attention to the support of local organizations, businesses, and elected officials.
- Working on various recruitment efforts such as *Coffee with a Commissioner* in an effort to recruit community members interested in serving on the Melrose Human Rights Commission and achieve full membership of 11 commissioners.
- Working with student groups and teachers at the middle school and high school to create a student internship with the Melrose Human Rights Commission so as to ensure that student's voices are honored and heard.

Now

The Melrose Human Rights Commission still has much more work to do... we are innovating and transforming our programming to meet the current human rights needs of our increasingly diverse community. Our commissioners are eager, energetic, and ready to work hard to continue to provide educational opportunities, lasting partnerships, support, and resources to achieve our mission of one community that is open to all.

There is still more that can be done. Our commission has been examining the current human rights of our community and over the next two months are building out an action plan that we hope to work on through the upcoming year. Some of the efforts that the Melrose Human Rights Commission is hoping to take are:

- Working with the Mayor's Office and the Melrose Police Department to ensure a systematic response to any civil rights incidents as well as an effective communication process about said incidents.
- Continuously collect incident data so the Melrose Human Rights Commission is always aware of what the most pressing human rights needs are in Melrose. From that, we hope to provide educational opportunities as to why certain actions are considered a human rights violation and provide current resources and support to those whose rights were violated.
- Training of Melrose Human Rights commissioners so they feel empowered and equipped to have difficult, yet educational, conversations within our community.
- Continuing to forge partnerships between support and advocacy groups, teachers and school leadership, law enforcement, public library, and the city so the trust can be established. With deeper relationships and trust, we hope that more education can be provided to the community as a whole.
- Develop and make readily available a *Community Resource Directory* of support and advocacy groups, nonprofits, as well as city and state agencies involved in community affairs.
- Working with Melrose Public Schools and PTOs to foster a relationship with our youngest residents and a platform for their voices to be heard.

There has been an increased and renewed interest in the Melrose Human Rights Commission from the community. Our current restructuring and reorganization has been in response to that demand. As one can see, we are hoping to take on some new and innovative programming for the next fiscal year and hope to use our \$3,000 appropriation for training, resources and support development, and community educational opportunities. Our ability to fundraise is difficult as our work is made possible through the dedication of our 11 volunteer public servants and much of our volunteer time and energy is spent on developing the Commission's programming. This is why I am asking this council to commit to keeping our funding the same as it has been - \$3,000, and with it, I give a promise – that we will be good stewards of the funds we are allotted. We will continue to seek to expand our programming and out-reach.

Thank you for your continued support.