

## Inspector General Proposal Flawed

Testimony of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau

Before the

**Boston City Council's Committee on Government Operations**

November 7, 2019

**Regarding: Docket #1337**, an ordinance establishing the Office of Inspector General within the City of Boston

Chairman Flaherty and members of the Committee, my name is Pam Kocher and I am the President of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau. I am also a city resident.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to Docket #1337, the proposal to establish an Office of Inspector General within the City of Boston.

### Commitment to prevent, detect and correct fraud, waste and abuse

The Research Bureau applauds the commitment to prevent, detect and correct fraud, waste and abuse in city government.

However, the Research Bureau takes issue with the proposed approach of creating a City of Boston Office of Inspector General to meet that mission.

### Resources sought in a City Inspector General are already available

The resources to meet that mission area already available to the City of Boston at the State Inspector General's Office. The State Inspector General's Office plays a key role in addressing fraud, waste and abuse in cities and towns, not just in the state government, and has an expert understanding of Massachusetts local government policies and procedures, including Boston, and a keen awareness of city and town functions prone to be problematic. The City of Boston has availed itself of this state resource a number of times and partnered with the State Inspector General's office to address and prevent fraud, waste and abuse.

In addition to conducting investigations, reviews and audits, the State Inspector General's Office also engages with local governments, including Boston, with education, training and policies and procedures on best practices to prevent fraud, waste and abuse. As one of the other hearing panelists noted, over 300 city employees have received training through State Inspector General programs, and more training for city employees is available were the City to request it.

### **Need for independent, external investigation**

The proposed ordinance expresses interest in an Independent Inspector General. Continued use of the State Inspector General Office would ensure independence far more than the proposed City Inspector General: under the ordinance, the City Inspector General would be at risk of removal by city officials whose own actions could necessitate investigation by that same City Inspector General.

### **Unnecessary additional spending**

The proposed ordinance indicates a preference for a City Inspector General "rather than bringing in costly outside counsel" to address issues as they arise. Note that the State Inspector General's services and resources are free to Boston and all other Massachusetts communities.

Establishing a City Inspector General office would duplicate resources already available in the State Inspector General office, require hiring additional city employees, including not only the Inspector General position itself but also most likely attorneys, forensic accountants and other investigators, as well as technology experts to manage highly secure, confidential data systems.

The ordinance calls for funding for a City Inspector General at a minimum amount equal to .01% of departmental appropriations (with exclusions). This amount, based on the City's 2020 budget, would be about \$265,000, an amount unlikely to be sufficient to meet the mission of a City Inspector General office.

The State Inspector General's office has a history of partnering on city matters to address and prevent waste, fraud and abuse in city government, at no cost to the city.

### **Recommendation**

The Research Bureau strongly recommends the City would be best served by continuing to utilize the State Inspector General Office as a resource for addressing and preventing fraud, waste and abuse in city government.