

EXHIBIT C

Dr. Ojikutu Press Statements from December 20, 2021

Good morning and thank you Mayor Wu for your leadership. I would like to describe why the City is implementing a **multilayered, comprehensive strategy** to address COVID-19 that includes the requirement for proof of vaccination for certain indoor spaces, the "B Together Initiative".

Boston is currently experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases. New positive cases in our city have increased almost 90% compared to two weeks ago, and we are now averaging 369 new cases per day. Our most recent citywide positivity rate is 6.7%.

Hospitalizations are also increasing, and frankly our hospital resources are stretched thin. On average, 229 adults are hospitalized with COVID per day in Boston. This is more than 60% higher than two weeks ago. Among those who are hospitalized in with COVID-19, an estimated two thirds are unvaccinated.

On December 15th, the Boston Public Health Commission announced the identification of the first three confirmed cases of the omicron variant in Boston. Based upon what we know regarding the *extremely high transmissibility* of this variant, we anticipate that our case numbers in Boston will rise significantly in January. **That is why the B Together Initiative is critical to protect our residents and our city.**

The sheer number of cases that we anticipate WILL have a severe impact on our health care system. As mentioned our hospitals are already overwhelmed - As of last week, all Boston hospitals are now restricting non-urgent procedures. Our state department of public health released additional guidance to hospitals that requires them to reduce non-urgent procedures by 50% .

What do we need to do to protect Boston residents and preserve our hospital resources?

We have effective tools at our disposal – First and foremost, COVID-19 vaccines. Available data indicate that vaccination with boosting increases immunity and provides significant cross protection to the variants that have emerged to date, *including omicron*. *Critically*, the data indicate that vaccination will decrease the risk of severe hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

Unfortunately, in recent weeks, the number of Bostonians who have been newly vaccinated has stagnated. As of December 14th, 79% of Boston residents have received one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 68% are fully vaccinated. Only **31%** of Bostonians who are fully vaccinated have been boosted. Among 5-11 year olds, only **30%** have received their first dose of vaccine.

Significant racial and ethnic disparities persist, particularly among our youngest populations and among those who have been boosted.

We can and we must do better than this. This is why we are implementing the B together initiative. Indoor vaccine mandates, and mandates in general, increase vaccination rates. After New York City implemented its indoor vaccine mandate, known as the *Key to NYC* program, city wide vaccinations increased by 9% in just one month, and the number of doses administered has risen steadily since implementation. **Though the policy that will be implemented here in Boston does not currently include boosters,** we see this a step to encourage new vaccination uptake and we will adjust the policy as needed when the definition of fully vaccination changes.

Along with this new policy we must increase vaccination access. Everyone in Boston who wants to be vaccinated or boosted must be able to get one. If you are unable to access a vaccine appointment through local pharmacies or hospitals, we

strongly encourage you to access our family friendly clinic sites offering 1st and 2nd doses for 5 and up as well as booster doses.

This week, there are family clinic sites available for walk-in throughout the city. Through the end of December and January we will ALSO continue to operate higher-capacity, community-based vaccination sites, **including at the Tobin Community Center, at the Vine Street Community Center, Melnea Cass Recreational Complex, and City Hall.**

In addition, at least **6 NEW sites** will open throughout the city of Boston in collaboration with the state. All of these site locations, days and times will be available this week via boston.gov, 311 and the Mayor's Health Line.

As you are probably already aware, the state also plans to open Fenway Park to increase vaccine access in January, and we will

be working with them to ensure residents from across the city have access to this site.

Increasing 5-11 vaccine access at schools is also critical to address known disparities, therefore, 24 on-site school clinics are scheduled for Boston Public Schools through February 2022, during which 1st doses, 2nd doses and boosters can be obtained – and more are being scheduled. Please get your child vaccinated at one of the publicly available sites.

While we are increasing supply, **we must also increase demand**. This past Saturday we held a high-capacity vaccine clinic and we vaccinated 649 people, but we had the capacity to vaccinate 800. We believe that the **B Together Initiative** will increase demand for vaccination, and we will be ready to meet this increased demand.

Bracing for a new variant and dealing with a winter surge is certainly not what we had hoped for. Though we are tired and we are frustrated we must continue to press forward to protect the health and wellbeing of ourselves, our families and our communities. Please remember that all of our prevention strategies are important – continue to wear masks indoors, wash your hands frequently, monitor yourself and your children for symptoms, get tested, get vaccinated, get boosted and **we will get through this together.**

Thank you
