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For Wu, ‘The state of our city is strong’

In annual address, mayor puts focus on housing, education, Mass. and Cass

By Danny McDonald
GLOBE STAFF

In her second annual State of the City address, Mayor Michelle Wu on Tuesday juxtaposed her efforts to deliver epochal change on the issues that have vexed Boston for years, from housing to climate change to public education, against the more

prosaic demands of providing everyday nuts-and-bolts city services. “The state of our city is strong,” Wu said to applause from a crowd of a few thousand that included Governor Maura Healey at the MGM Music Hall at Fenway. “Not because the challenges that remain are simple or small. But because they’re

big, and they matter, and we are rising to meet them. And that starts with housing, because home is the place where everything starts.” The State of the City is typically the biggest annual speech for the mayor of Boston. It often acts as a victory lap of sorts for the chief executive, who typically reviews the accomplishments of their term to date while also laying out a vision for the future. The rhetoric trends toward the

lofty, the scope is typically wide. The city’s challenges and shortcomings are usually framed as things that can surely be overcome, or have already been defeated. Tuesday’s oration was no different. The speech was briefly disrupted at its start by pro-Palestinian protesters. Two demonstrators stood with a Palestinian flag in front of the stage and banners were dropped from the upper levels of

WU, Page A10

‘Everybody around the state should be paying attention to this. How we respond will have implications for future economic inequality.’

THOMAS KANE, *an economist with the Harvard Graduate School of Education*



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Eric Williams and Lana Russell practiced in a hallway at Conservatory Lab charter school in Dorchester.

CHARTER SCHOOLS STRUGGLE TO GET BACK IN THE GROOVE

Difficulties since pandemic reflect challenges for low-income students



Conservatory Lab was named a school of recognition for its improvement on the 2023 MCAS exams.

By James Vaznis
GLOBE STAFF

Boston charter schools appeared well poised two years ago for a dramatic rebound in academic performance when classrooms reopened after the pandemic shutdown. The schools long ago earned a national reputation for working magic with academically struggling students from low-income households, propelling them to the top of MCAS exams and on to college.

Behind their success was strong reliance on the same techniques researchers are now pushing districts nationwide to adopt for a post-pandemic recovery: longer school days and years, high-dose tutoring, and a

laser-like focus on each student’s academic needs. But a quick turnaround remains elusive. Nearly all of Boston’s 15 independently run charters are struggling to boost MCAS scores, which tumbled dramatically during the pandemic, and are grappling with high rates of student absences, according to a Globe review.

As schools across Massachusetts try to get academic achievement back on track, the challenges confronting Boston charters reveal that the most effective interventions will go only so far for schools largely serving low-income students, like Boston charters do, even when they had pre-

CHARTER SCHOOLS, Page A10

A federal appeals court expressed skepticism about Donald Trump’s claim that he is immune from charges of plotting to subvert the 2020 election, suggesting it’s unlikely to rule in his favor on a key point. **A2.**

Storming out

Wednesday: Clearing, warm. High 51-56. Low 34-39.
Thursday: Sunny, nice. High 44-49. Low 33-38.
Weather and Comics, G6-7. Obituaries, C9.

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Taken aback on the wait for the bus

Cambridge passengers not taking misinstalled bench sitting down

By Taylor Dolven
GLOBE STAFF

It was a much needed upgrade for riders of the MBTA’s 71 and 73 buses: a bench to rest on at the stop on Mount Auburn Street near the intersection with Sparks Street. So why did residents start complaining almost as soon as it was installed late last year? Because, as it turns out, Cambridge put it in backward, directly facing the green hedge on the other side of the sidewalk rather than toward the street and the approaching buses on their way to Belmont or Watertown.

If the bus pulls up to the curb right to where the stop is marked by a pole, riders have to shimmy their way between the back of the bench and the bus to make it to the door.

Oops, said the city. Cambridge spokesperson Jeremy Warnick said the Cambridge transportation department plans to relocate the bench so that it faces the street with its back



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

The hedge view isn’t quite doing it for bus riders on Mount Auburn Street at Sparks Street.

near the hedge once there’s a break in winter storms. “The person executing this from a marking perspective misunderstood,” Warnick said. “It was mistaken

BENCH, Page A7

Mixed news for Trump in N.H. poll

Far ahead of Haley but would lose to Biden again

By Matt Stout
and Jim Puzzanghera
GLOBE STAFF

Two weeks before the New Hampshire presidential primary, Donald Trump holds a nearly 20 percentage point lead over Nikki Haley, but would lose a general election rematch with President Biden by roughly 7 points, a new Suffolk University/Boston Globe/USA Today poll found.

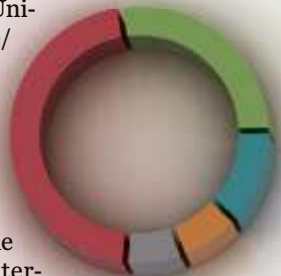
Voters in the swing state said they were worried about immigration and the economy, but their biggest concern was one Biden has made a centerpiece of his campaign — the future of American democracy.

In the Republican race, 46 percent of likely voters said they intend to vote for the former president, compared to 27 percent who support Haley, the former United Nations ambassador and South Carolina governor whose support has surged in recent weeks and who now has the backing of popular New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu. Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie is in third with 12 percent, followed by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis at 8 percent.

But Haley might have trouble making up any more ground: About 8 out of 10 GOP primary voters said they’re unlikely to change their minds before the Jan. 23 primary, according to the survey. To close the gap, Haley would probably need several things to break her way, including Christie deciding to drop out, said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. He noted that the poll showed Christie’s supporters would break by a 7-to-1 margin to her over Trump.

“Governor Sununu’s endorsement,” said Paleologos. **POLL, Page A6**

OF THE MAJOR GOP HOPEFULS, WHO WILL YOU VOTE FOR OR WHO DO YOU LEAN TOWARD AT THIS POINT?



Donald Trump
46%

Nikki Haley
27%

Chris Christie
12%

Ron DeSantis
8%

Other
7%

SOURCE: Suffolk University/Boston Globe/USA TODAY • Live caller, mobile/landline poll of 1,000 likely New Hampshire voters conducted between Jan. 3 and Jan. 7. Margin of error of 4.91 likely Republican primary voters: +/- 4.4 percentage points

GLOBE STAFF

A call in Rome spelled the end for Gay

Previously supportive, Harvard Corporation decided it had seen enough

By Mike Damiano
GLOBE STAFF

They sat together courtside on Saturday, two pathbreaking Massachusetts leaders and Harvard alumni — Governor Maura Healey and former Harvard University president Claudine Gay — watching the Crimson women’s basketball team beat the school’s biggest rival, Yale.

It was a victory they could both appreciate. Healey is a former member of the team. Gay, Healey said, “goes to a lot of the women’s games,” and knows the players.

But just four days after Gay’s sudden resignation as Harvard’s president, the mood was also somber. At halftime, Healey walked down from the stands, where she’d been sitting with family and friends. She took a seat beside Gay and put an arm around the back of her chair.

“We talked about how she was doing, how she was feeling,” Healey said. “You know, the moment.” As they spoke, a procession of students, alumni, and other fans stopped to offer words of support or a hug to Gay, Healey recalled.

When the buzzer blared, the players came by, too. “Everyone gave her a hug,” Healey said.

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