



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS**  
**2022 Attorney General**  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Candidate:** Quentin Palfrey

**Office Sought:** Attorney General

**Party:** Democrat

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## OVERVIEW

***We view our questionnaire as an educational resource, for both candidates and voters, on progressive approaches to the issues. It provides candidates the opportunity to address a number of important issues beyond the surface talking points and provides progressive voters an extremely valuable resource when making a decision.***

Our Questionnaire starts with an “About You” section and ends with an opportunity for you to include additional remarks beyond what we asked.

The bulk of our questionnaire is focused on the issues outlined in our [Progressive Platform](#), which also inform our [Legislative Agenda](#). We are interested in your overall philosophy as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.

Each section features charts or graphs (with links to sources) that illustrate one or more facets of the issue under discussion.

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*Each section contains open-ended questions and YES/NO questions. **If the question is a YES/NO question, please answer either YES or NO.** Feel free to expand your answers, but **please keep answers < 150 words.***

### **Issue Subsections:**

- A. Jobs and the Economy
- B. Education
- C. Health Care
- D. Housing
- E. Racial and Social Justice
- F. Good Government and Strong Democracy
- G. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

## **I. About You & Your Governing Approach**

### **1. Why are you running for office? And what would be your top 3 priorities if elected?**

As a former Assistant Attorney General, I've seen firsthand how much impact the AG can have on people's lives. At a time when Washington is broken, Massachusetts needs to lead on the biggest challenges of our time – including racial injustice, the climate crisis, and attacks on our democracy. In recent years, the AG has played an important role in consumer protection, workers' rights, civil rights, and environmental protection – taking on big banks, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, polluters, and the Trump administration. At the same time, renewed sanity in the White House creates an opportunity for the AG office to shift more of our focus to important challenges in Massachusetts, including health care access, educational equity, economic justice, criminal justice reform, and promoting transparency and accountability. As a father of three children, I want to help lead Massachusetts in the direction of justice, broad-based prosperity, and a sustainable future.

### **2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?**

For most of my career, I have served as a public attorney. As an assistant attorney general, I served as the first chief of the healthcare division, where I sued big insurance companies who were putting their own profits before the health of their clients and forced these bad actors out of the marketplace. In the Obama administration, I served as Senior Advisor for Jobs & Competitiveness in the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy. On Day One of the Biden Administration, I was asked to serve as Acting General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Commerce, where I led a team of several hundred lawyers and helped to launch the Build Back Better agenda. I also founded a national voting rights organization called the Voter Protection Corps.

### **3. The Attorney General has a powerful platform for influencing state legislation. What would be your top legislative priorities if elected, and how would you work to pass them?**

The AG can have a powerful impact on the public conversation and I plan to use the bully pulpit of the office to fight for progressive legislation. There is a long list of progressive bills I support, but some key ones include:

- expanding the AG's power to protect workers from wage theft;
- democracy reforms, including vote-by-mail and election day registration;
- the safe communities act;
- the fair share amendment;
- the healthy youth act;
- Medicare for all;
- reforming qualified immunity.

### **4. What do you view the role of the office of the AG in protecting Massachusetts's interests on the national level?**

The Massachusetts AGO has had a huge impact at the national level in recent years by joining

together with other like-minded attorney generals to bring multi-state actions against big banks, pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, polluters, and the federal government. *Massachusetts v. EPA* was a landmark case with far-reaching implications. Recent examples include litigation against Purdue Pharma and the Sackler family relating to opioids, litigation against Exxon-Mobil; and a variety of impactful suits against the Trump administration. As a former Assistant Attorney General, I co-led a major investigation (along with the Texas AGO) that led to a \$175 million settlement against a large insurance company for bid-rigging and price-fixing. I believe my direct experience on these cases – combined with my experience in the Obama and Biden Administrations – will put me in a great position to understand how to use the office effectively at the national level on day one.

**5. What are your thoughts on striking the appropriate balance between the Attorney General's role as the lawyer representing the state's officials and the AG's role as an independently elected government official? For example, under what circumstances would you as AG decline to follow the wishes of a state client?**

As an independently constitutionally elected statewide official, the AG has a responsibility to look after the best interest of the Commonwealth. That responsibility includes the responsibility to advise and represent state agencies, but the AG is not obligated to take a narrow view of its role – and should not never defend the indefensible. I have direct experience with playing this role effectively. On day one of the Biden Administration, I was the chief legal officer for the US Department of Commerce, and effectively took responsibility for the actions and legal positions we inherited from the Trump administration. Working with the Justice Department, we settled several important lawsuits and took other steps to redirect government policies with which we disagreed. Sometimes, a government lawyer can have the greatest impact on long-term outcomes by being a thoughtful counselor in a defensive or counseling posture.

**6. The Attorney General is the state's top law enforcement official and, in that role, will often partner with state police for investigations and prosecutions. This creates an inevitable conflict with relation to investigating actions done by state police. How would you address this conflict?**

There is an urgent need for more accountability from the State Police. The citizens of Massachusetts deserve to be able to trust that people working on their behalf are doing so in their best interest. As Attorney General, I will play an active role in investigating allegations of misconduct by the state police, including allegations of misuse of authority as well as abuses of the state overtime system. Moreover, as I have already discussed repeatedly in this campaign, I will push for legislation to remove the defense of qualified immunity for police officers accused of misconduct, as well as call for the creation of a transparent and public statewide registry of known instances of police misconduct (aka a statewide Brady list).

**7. Provide an example of a time that you built a broad coalition to achieve a desired policy outcome.**

As the first chief of the Health Care Division in the Attorney General's office, I worked with a broad coalition of stakeholders to implement the newly-passed healthcare reform in

Massachusetts. We worked hard to make sure that everyone had access to high-quality, affordable health care. The Attorney General's office was the main consumer voice in that conversation, working with a wide range of stakeholders including organized labor (especially SEIU 1999), advocates such as Health Care For All and Health Law Advocates, the faith community (especially Greater Boston Interfaith Organization), private sector leaders such as employers, the Massachusetts Hospital Association, health insurers, political leaders, and others to develop fair rules for minimum creditable coverage, the individual mandate, health care cost containment, efforts to measure and reduce racial disparities, and other priorities. While we often disagreed on specific issues with some of the stakeholders at the table, we were able to advance a set of reforms that had the effect of dramatically decreasing the uninsurance rate in Massachusetts and providing meaningful improvements for many people across the state. As discussed further below – there is so much more to do to improve health care access. I am a longtime supporter of single-payer healthcare / Medicare for All. I think that we need to do much more to address health care affordability, remedy racial disparities, and invest in public health. But I am proud of my work to build coalitions in this space, leading to real results.

**8. Did Attorney General Healey join any amicus briefs with other attorneys general that you would not have joined or vice versa? Which one(s), and why?**

AG Healey has joined – and in many cases led – a number of amicus briefs with which I strongly agree – in support of abortion rights, on behalf of workers, and to check the power of corporations (more specifically, Exxon Mobil). Attorney General Healey has used the office as a highly effective platform from which to weigh in on issues of national importance, and I cannot cite an amicus brief that AG Healey filed with which I would have declined to join. As Attorney General, I will continue to use amicus briefs as tools to weigh in on issues of national importance that impact Massachusetts. And this remains an incredibly important tool as some states continue to test the legitimacy of federal law through a conservative majority US Supreme Court. I will be extra vigilant about challenges to reproductive rights, voting rights, civil rights, workers' rights and the ability of workers to form unions, and the human rights of immigrants and undocumented residents.

And I will close by saying that while I deeply respect her work – and will seek to build on the many successes of the office – there are, of course, some policy issues on which I have had differences with AG Healey, including, for instance, facial recognition, no-knock warrants, cannabis legalization, and some of the proposals for addressing the situation at Mass & Cass.

## II. The Issues

### A. Jobs and the Economy

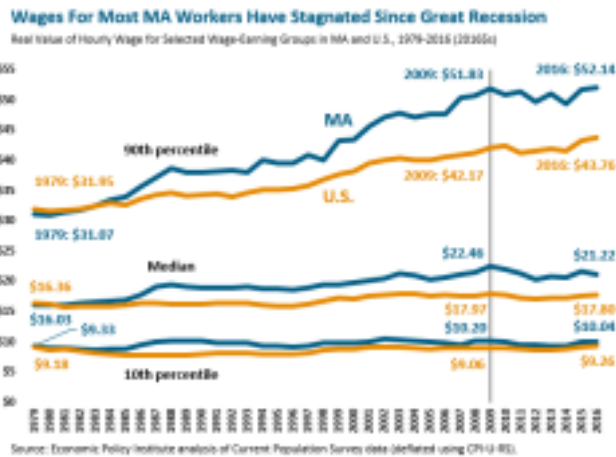
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which strain wages. A strong economy depends on strong wages, as workers spend and help local economies thrive. Although the recently passed minimum wage increase will eventually lift the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, this is [still not a living wage](#) for many.

In recent decades, unions have been under attack. However, unions played—and continue to play—a pivotal role in creating a strong middle class. With weaker unions (or no unions at all) come weaker social and economic rights and an imbalanced economy.

**Productivity has grown significantly since the 1970s, but it is not being reflected in higher wages.**



**Wages for most MA workers have remained stagnant since the Great Recession.**



**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.)**

- I have spent a good portion of my career working on issues of inequality and poverty and trying to build an economy that works for everyone. I have twice served in the U.S. Department of Commerce, most recently as Acting General Counsel, leading a team of several hundred lawyers in a Department with more than 50,000 employees and a \$12B budget. I also worked on economic policy in the White House under President Obama as Senior Advisor for Jobs & Competitiveness in the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy. I was also the executive director of J-PAL North America (MIT's poverty lab).
- The economy of Massachusetts is not working for everyone, and we must be deliberate in our efforts to narrow the opportunity gap. This starts with ensuring that workers are being fairly compensated and that they have the right to bargain collectively. The AG office has a number of important tools to stand up for workers, consumer protection, and civil rights.
- One of my key priorities as attorney general will be to crack down on wage theft and eliminate carve-outs in the law, such as sub-minimum wage for tipped workers and misclassification of employees.
- We also must be vigorous in our efforts to dismantle institutional and structural racism, as well as the mistreatment of undocumented workers.
- I have written extensively on this and related issues, this campaign, and throughout my career. A few selected articles are posted below.

Fighting Wage theft and standing up for worker's rights

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/fighting-wage-theft-and-standing-up-for-workers-rights-d71c1e6e045e>

Building an economy that works for everyone

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/building-an-economy-that-works-for-everyone-5afcf3c10345>

New Report: Investing in Innovation is Crucial to Economic Growth and Competitiveness

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/01/06/new-report-investing-innovation-crucial-economic-growth-and-competitiveness>

Laying the Groundwork for American Competitiveness Throughout the 21st Century

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/09/26/laying-groundwork-american-competitiveness-throughout-21st-century>

Jobs Council Discusses Innovation and American Competitiveness

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/01/17/jobs-council-discusses-innovation-and-american-competitiveness>

**2. Combating Wage Theft. The Attorney General's Fair Labor Division ensures workers are paid the wages they are owed and that businesses that play by the rules don't get undercut by competitors who save costs at the expense of their workers. The AG's office has succeeded at collecting funds from employers from employers who violated the law and returned the money to impacted workers; however, for many workers, the money comes months after they have earned the wages. What would you do as AG to prevent bad employers from continuing to operate and deny workers the wages to which they are entitled?**

The Attorney General needs new powers to protect workers. As Massachusetts continues to claw its way out of the economic challenges caused by the pandemic, low income workers across the Commonwealth are increasingly exploited by unscrupulous employers who refuse to pay them what they have earned. This set of bad practices — collectively known as wage theft — affects hundreds of thousands of low-wage workers in Massachusetts a year, depriving them of nearly a billion dollars in stolen wages, according to some estimates. Too often, companies farm out work to subcontractors that violate prevailing wage, minimum wage, and overtime laws and exploit undocumented workers. When employers misclassify full time workers as independent contractors, it harms hard-working employees and the economy as a whole — and it violates Massachusetts law. Last year, the Attorney General's Office issued 160 citations against 72 construction companies for misclassifying workers and violating prevailing wage laws. The Attorney General's Office returned more than \$750,000 in wages to 565 workers and fined companies more than \$500,000 for their misconduct. But there is much more to be done. To combat this growing problem, the legislature should act right away to increase the powers of the Attorney General and workers themselves. A pair of bills filed by Sen. Sal DiDomenico (S1179) and Rep. Dan Donahue (H1959) would clarify responsibility for upholding labor standards and give the Attorney General and workers new tools to fight wage theft and hold violators accountable. Among other things, these important bills would put lead contractors on notice when their subcontractors fail to obey the law, give the Attorney General the power to bring civil wage theft cases directly to court, allow the Attorney General to issue stop-work orders, and give whistleblowers new rights and protections from retaliation. As a former Assistant Attorney General, I've seen firsthand how much impact the Attorney General can have on the lives of workers and consumers. And as a political appointee in the administrations of Presidents Obama and Biden, I have worked hard throughout my career to help build an economy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy. In a time of staggering income and wealth inequality, Massachusetts needs to step up to make sure that workers actually receive the wages they have earned through their hard work. It's time for the legislature to act to give the Attorney General and workers new tools to take on wage theft.

**3. Protecting All Workers. Declining union density—private-sector union membership was a mere 6.2% in 2019 (BLS 2020)—increases the risk of labor law violations: Workers not covered by union contracts are almost twice as likely to experience minimum wage violations as those in a union or covered by a union contract. Meanwhile, available resources for enforcement of workplace laws are**



**insufficient, both at the federal and state levels. What will you do to protect and defend wage protections for nonunion workers?**

Unions are essential to the creation of not just a middle class but a safe place to work. Despite this, the legal system too often keeps workers from organizing in the private sector. This is unacceptable. As Attorney General, I will do whatever I can to fill the gaps for unorganized workers until they can get their first collective bargaining agreement. This means committing greater resources to combating wage theft, unsafe work conditions, sick leave retaliation, enforcement of overtime regulations, and other protections for these workers who are so important to building a strong economy.

To protect non-union workers, the AG must place a greater emphasis on investigating complaints and holding violators accountable. This means committing greater resources to the labor enforcement in the AG Office (particularly hiring more investigators) and making it easier for whistleblowers and complainants to come forward without fear of reprisals. Wage theft has a profoundly harmful effect on the most vulnerable workers in our economy – especially undocumented workers.

**4. Union Protections. How will your office expand the rights of unions to represent and organize workers?**

As AG I will support legislation, similar to efforts the legislature undertook post-Janus and encourage the legislature to grant the AG's office additional powers to ensure the rights of all workers to collectively bargain. I would also support legislation that would prevent coercive activities or scare tactics used against employees from forming or joining a Union.

**5. Occupational Safety. Assuming the recurrence of another pandemic, what role can the AG play in expanding enforcement of existing occupational safety and health laws?**

The AG's office can support legislation requiring a safe environment for employees including social distancing requirements/guidelines, masks, barriers, and other PPE. Collective bargaining agreements should also include provisions to protect worker safety during future pandemics.

**6. Unsafe Workplace Conditions. AG Healey established a process by which workers could report concerns about unsafe working conditions, with the option to remain anonymous. How will you expand the ability of workers to report conditions without fear of reprisal?**

We need to put employers on notice that any reprisals or attempts at interference will be vigorously investigated and (if warranted) prosecuted. The legislature should also expand whistleblower protections. Education efforts are also important to ensuring that workers and employers are aware of existing rules for reporting

unsafe working conditions.

7. **Fighting Discrimination in the Workplace. How will your office strengthen enforcement of laws ensuring that individuals are not being discriminated against in hiring or promotions for reasons of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, or national origin?**

Eliminating racial and ethnic discrimination is fundamental to fighting economic inequality and systemic racism, and to closing the profound racial wealth gap in the Commonwealth. The Attorney General must continue the battle against discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender, and push to close gender pay disparities. There are significant challenges ahead to make the workplace safe place for everyone regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. And we also must ensure that all workers are protected regardless of their religious beliefs and observances, or whether they have a disability.

As Attorney General, I would aggressively pursue the AG's authorities to investigate, prosecute, and refer for prosecution violations of the Massachusetts antidiscrimination laws, including the Pay Equity Act. I also would use the AGO's authorities to support the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and the U.S. Attorney's Office in the prosecution of discrimination claims. But the Commonwealth can do much more, which is why I will advocate for critical legislative reforms:

- Extend statutes of limitations in employment discrimination matters.
- Broaden the coverage of the Commonwealth's employment discrimination statutes to cover all employers, regardless of the number of their employees; as well as independent contractors, unpaid interns, and job applicants.
- Abolish mandatory nondisclosure agreements, to prevent employers from hiding their discriminatory practices behind a shield of secrecy.
- Prevent forced arbitration for discrimination claims, to ensure that all workers have their day in court.
- Prevent state and municipal funds from being used to pay settlements in discrimination lawsuits.

8. **Fighting Sexual Harassment in the Workplace. How will your office strengthen protections against sexual harassment?**

The Attorney General's Office must continue to strengthen protections against sexual harassment, as well as harassment on other bases such as race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability. In many instances, workers may be harassed on the basis of multiple identities. Critically, enhanced protections against harassment must be available to workers regardless of the type of work that they do, or their income level.

I will advocate for reforms that will more effectively protect against sexual harassment and other types of harassment in the workplace, including:

- Extend statutes of limitations in employment discrimination matters.
- Broaden the coverage of the Commonwealth's employment discrimination statutes to cover all employers, regardless of the number of their employees; as well as independent contractors, unpaid interns, and job applicants.
- Abolish mandatory nondisclosure agreements, to prevent employers from hiding their discriminatory practices behind a shield of secrecy.
- Prevent forced arbitration for discrimination claims, to ensure that every worker has their day in court.
- Prevent state and municipal funds from being used to pay settlements in discrimination lawsuits.

9. **Disability Rights in the Workplace. How will your office strengthen the opportunities afforded to people with disabilities during the pandemic, such as access to remote work?**

Attorney General Maura Healey issued (and I would continue to support) guidance making it clear to employers that workers with disabilities have the right to request remote work as a reasonable accommodation. The onus should be on employers to argue that the work can't be done remotely.  
(<https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-disability-rights-guidance/download>)

There was a lot of understandable frustration in the community that employers who had denied remote work as an accommodation for years pre-COVID suddenly were able to make it happen once non-disabled employees needed it. There is a fear that it will go back to being unavailable once the pandemic dies down. If someone has a disability that impedes their ability to work in person, they have the right to request remote work even once the pandemic is over. Employers cannot argue that work done remotely during the pandemic cannot reasonably continue to be done remotely.

10. **One Fair Wage. Do you support eliminating the subminimum wage for tipped workers? (Y/N)**

YES.

11. **Wage Transparency. Would you support legislation requiring the submission of wage data to a public database maintained by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and broken down by gender and race? (Y/N)**

YES.

12. **Fair Scheduling. Many workers in the service sector face irregular working hours, making it difficult to plan for other life events. Would you support legislation providing workers the right to 14 days advance notice of hours and the right to request specific hours without retaliation from the employer? (Y/N)**

YES.

13. **Mandatory Arbitration. Would you support legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory arbitration provisions in employment contracts, i.e., requirements that an employee forfeits the right to sue the employer for discrimination, nonpayment of wages, or other illegal conduct? (Y/N)**

YES.

14. **Gig Economy. More than 200,000 workers in Massachusetts now work in the “gig economy,” with the rise of app-based platforms. However, their employers often seek to evade labor law in order to avoid treating them as employees and provide decent pay and benefits.**

- a. **Do you oppose the November 2022 ballot initiative backed by Uber and Lyft to rewrite current state labor law to exclude hundreds of thousands of workers from fundamental rights and protections? (Y/N)**

YES.

- b. **How would your office work to expand the rights of such gig workers?**

Massachusetts labor laws apply to Uber and Lyft and other companies that employ gig workers—there must not be any carve outs that enable the skirting of these laws. If an employee is working full time for a company that employee is entitled to all the benefits and protections afforded them. The company is also responsible for its share of taxes, unemployment, medicare, and workers compensation.

Besides vigorously enforcing current laws, the AG’s office can work with the legislature to expand the rights of workers and to provide additional mechanisms to hold corporations accountable.

15. **Corporate Consolidation. What would be your office’s approach to the increasing monopolization of numerous sectors of the economy, which is bad for workers and consumers?**

The power of corporations is growing and if left unchecked will have a negative impact on our economy. A troubling symptom of this unchecked power is the consolidation of corporations leading to megacorporations that could ultimately lead to monopolies. Monopolies have a negative impact on our economy in the form of higher prices for goods and services, fewer choices for consumers, and discouraging innovation. Monopolies also have a negative impact on workers as they provide fewer options for advancement and depress wages and benefits.

The AG has significant authority to address the consolidation of market power, both through the AG’s antitrust powers and the AG’s consumer protection powers. As an

Assistant Attorney General, I led national multistate investigations of bid-rigging and price fixing behavior by insurance companies, leading to multimillion dollar recoveries for consumers, and I have direct experience in using the office's powers to rein in corporate consolidation and other antitrust harms.

## B. Education

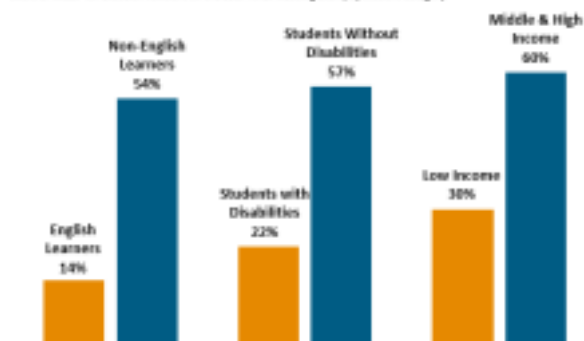
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country. Powerful corporate interests are promoting false solutions and working to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups invest millions of dollars to promote the expansion of privately run charter schools, which siphon money from our public K-12 districts while largely excluding students with the greatest needs. Costly, mandated standardized test results are used to label schools as “failing” and justify these privatization schemes. State receiverships in struggling school districts advance a privatization agenda by disenfranchising voters through stripping those they elect of their power to represent them.

Most of the [fastest-growing occupations](#) require education beyond a high school diploma, but Massachusetts has been disinvesting from public higher education for the past two decades. This has led to higher tuition costs, putting students at risk of long-term debt or making higher education out of reach for them entirely.

### Massachusetts has significant achievement gaps reflective of resource gaps.

#### Massachusetts Has Significant Achievement Gaps for Disadvantaged Youth in 4th Grade Reading

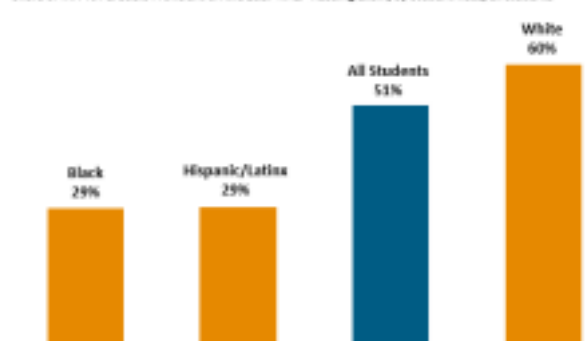
Share of Mass. 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Category



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

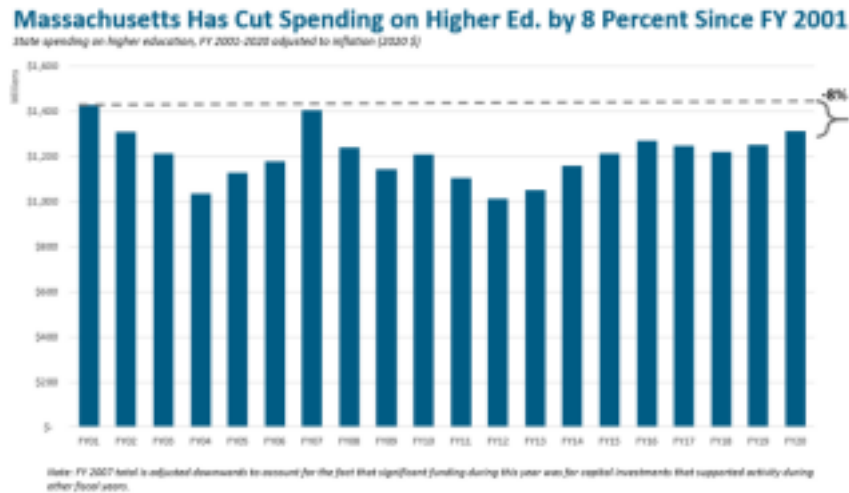
#### Massachusetts Has Significant Achievement Gaps for Youth of Color in 4th Grade Reading

Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

**Massachusetts has been disinvesting from higher education and shifting the cost burden onto students.**



**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

Massachusetts has some of the best public schools in the world. If you look at our test scores, Massachusetts consistently ranks at or near the top of national rankings. This success is a testament to terrific teachers, staff, and administrators who dedicate their careers to caring for our children and teaching them the skills they need to succeed in our economy and society. However, sixty-eight years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Massachusetts schools are still starkly segregated by race. Moreover, despite laudable reforms to education funding formulas in recent years, there remain significant gaps in the resources spent on Massachusetts schools. In short, our education system is fundamentally both separate and unequal. There is an urgent need to remedy the stark and shameful inequalities in our schools on the basis of race, wealth, and zip code. The solution is to invest in our schools and our communities and to tackle structural obstacles head-on — not to undermine collective bargaining and siphon off money to unaccountable charter schools. As the chief civil rights official in the Commonwealth, the Attorney General should make the intentional disruption of educational injustice a key priority. It is an affront to our democracy for the quality of a child's education to be tied so directly to race and zip code.

I have written and spoken extensively on this topic for at least twenty years and on this campaign. A few examples include:

- Expanding Charters Schools is not the Answer to educational injustice  
<https://gpalfrey.medium.com/expanding-charter-schools-is-not-the-answer-to-educational-injustice-8367047f634b>
- It's Time to Fix Our Education Funding Formula and Invest in Our Public

Schools

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/its-time-to-fix-our-education-funding-formula-in-vest-in-our-public-schools-cf4f3414f95f>

- The State Judiciary's Role in Fulfilling Brown's Promise (Michigan Journal of Race & Law, 2002)  
<https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1166&context=mjrl>
- Tapping the Power of Technology to Teach Children Around the World  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/11/17/tapping-power-technology-teach-children-around-world>

I strongly support our public schools. While Massachusetts may receive national attention for its school systems, enormous gaps in education quality persist for low-income students and students of color. And now, as we work our way out of a pandemic, we must double-down on our efforts to make all of our public schools safe and supportive environments where teachers and staff feel valued, and students can gain critical skills necessary to be successful in school and life. I will stand with teachers, unions, parents, students, civil rights, and social justice groups – and fight to ensure our kids get the best education possible.

I will fully support:

- making universal early education an affordable reality for families across the Commonwealth
- following through on the promise of the Student Opportunity Act
- making tuition free at public colleges and universities
- expanding various social and emotional programs for K-12 students

2. **Fair Share. Do you support the proposed constitutional amendment to increase the tax on income over \$1 million by 4%, with the resulting revenue devoted to education and transportation needs (Fair Share Amendment)? (Y/N)**

YES.

3. **Equal Education Access for All. What would your office do to protect the right of all children to a high-quality public education?**

Massachusetts has a constitutional duty to cherish our public schools. To that end, I will use the legal authority of the Attorney General's Office to work to ensure that our schools are fully funded, regardless of zip code. There is an urgent need to reform our education system to live up to the promise of Brown. And indeed there is an affirmative requirement in the Massachusetts constitution that every child receive — as of right — a free and appropriate public education.

But expanding charter schools is not the answer to this challenge. Rather, expanding charter schools points in the wrong direction by undermining teachers, picking winners and losers, and draining much needed resources for low-income communities.



Instead, we should do the hard work of investing in schools and communities and taking head-on the underlying challenges that perpetuate the stark inequalities in our school system.

But a high-quality education isn't just about funding, it's also about creating safe and supportive environments so that every student has the opportunity to thrive. I will be vigilant in enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and work to implement policies that seek to end institutional racism. I will oppose efforts to ban programming that teaches students about embedded racism within our political, economic, and social systems.

4. **Education Privatization. In 2016, MA voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools given the millions of dollars it would have siphoned away from public school districts.**

a. **Do you support keeping the cap on charter schools?** (Y/N)

YES.

b. **Existing charter schools in Massachusetts have been known to have notoriously high suspension rates and questionable real estate practices. How would your office ensure greater accountability for the charter school sector?**

I will vigorously oppose expansion of charter schools and fight any lawsuit that seeks to overturn the cap on charter schools.

I will also prioritize investigating claims that charter schools are unfairly punishing students (whether through suspension or other measures), engaging in deceptive practices (e.g., false marketing), or partaking in shady real estate actions with municipalities.

The Attorney General's Office has a civil rights division for a reason – and I will use it to its full extent. I will seriously review complaints that allege deprivation of or interference with students' civil rights and liberties. And I vow to take enforcement action, if necessary.

5. **Receivership. The Lawrence Public Schools, Holyoke Public Schools, and Southbridge Public Schools are currently under state receivership, with a state-appointed receiver assuming the powers of a superintendent or democratically elected school committee. The state takeover has not produced sustainable gains and has at times been characterized by chronic mismanagement. Would you support ending the practice of state receivership and returning power to democratically elected school committees?** (Y/N)

YES.

First, takeovers perpetuate racial and economic injustice. They are often targeted at communities of color and strip democratically elected local officials of control over their schools. Receivership decisions are based largely on standardized test scores that research shows are [racially biased](#) and simply [don't accurately measure school quality](#). There is also significant evidence that takeovers have an abysmal track record. Holyoke and Southbridge, for example, were placed in receivership in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and yet student performance in these districts remains the [bottom 10%](#) in the state.

We must give school districts that are failing to provide a quality education to their students the tools that they need to course correct. The Commonwealth must provide additional resources to districts to develop a strategic plan for improving student performance, for professional development and more effective and efficient budgeting that ensures a district is able to invest properly in classroom instruction.

6. **Debt-Free College. Do you support making tuition (and mandatory curriculum fees) free at public colleges and universities?** (Y/N)

YES.

7. **Student Borrowers -- I. The Student Loan Borrower's Bill of Rights (SLBBOR) has been implemented, and the Student Loan Ombudsperson Office now exists within the Office of the Attorney General. What are your plans to ensure strong enforcement of the SLBBOR?**

Student loan debt is crippling. As I have traveled the state, I continually hear stories of young people who are delaying having a family or buying a home because of the burdens of student loans debt. And I often meet seniors who have retired but still carry loan debt. I am a proud alumnus of the Biden Administration, but I believe that the federal government must do more to eliminate federal student loan debt. There are more than a million student loan borrowers in Massachusetts who owe over \$33 billion in student debt. The AG office has an important role in standing up for student borrowers. Predatory practices by student lenders and student loan services are putting company profits over the well-being of our students and graduates. The Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights is a step toward leveling the playing field between students and predatory loan servicers. As Attorney General, I will take full advantage of the enforcement powers in the new legislation to sue bad actors in the student loan servicing industry, and to make sure that consumers are treated fairly and are not caught in an endless cycle of debt. I will ensure that the settlements that Attorney General Healey reached with student loan services PHEAA and Naviant are fully implemented and that Massachusetts borrowers receive every penny that they are owed. And I will continue and strengthen the work of the AG's Student Loan Ombudsman and Student Loan Assistance Office to address the student debt crisis in the Commonwealth.

8. **Student Borrowers -- II. Would you be willing to decertify private servicers of**

**federal student loans with records of state SLBBOR violations and poor behavior even if that may cause legal conflicts with the US Department of Education?**  
(Y/N)

YES.

9. **Student Borrowers -- III. Would you be willing to file legislation to provide additional authority to the Office of the Attorney General to address student loan-related issues if you felt existing authority was insufficient?** (Y/N)

YES.

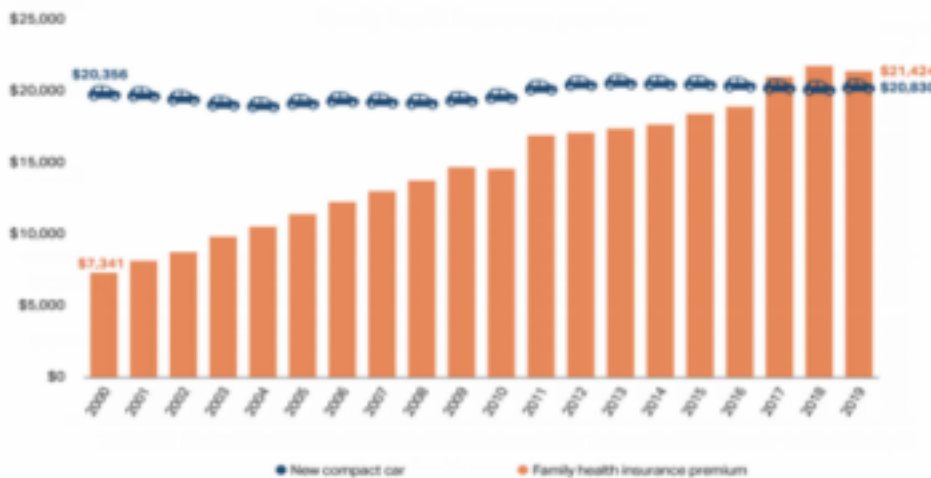
### C. Health Care

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with [97% of the state](#) having health insurance. But until that is 100%, we haven't reached truly universal coverage or tackled critical barriers to accessing care. Disparities in insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and high deductibles mean that many do not get the health care they need—or suffer from long-lasting debt if they do. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes. The pandemic has put a spotlight on these health care inequities and the need to invest in a stronger public health infrastructure and be more resilient for the pandemics and challenges of the future.

**Massachusetts health insurance premiums have skyrocketed over the past two decades.**

#### Massachusetts health insurance premiums have tripled in 19 years and consume an ever-larger portion of earnings for middle class families.

Average total cost for Massachusetts family health insurance premiums and national cost of a new compact car

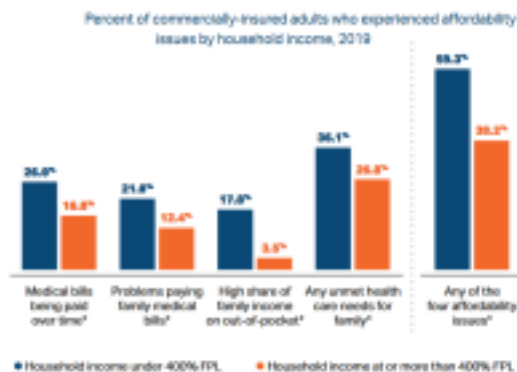


The share of middle-class commercially-insured Massachusetts families with more than ¼ of total earnings going to health care rose from 28% in 2013-2015 to 33% in 2016-2018.

Notes: Data are in normal dollars of the year shown.  
 Sources: Family Health insurance premiums are for Massachusetts from the Agency for Health Care Quality – Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Insurance Component. Car cost information is based on car-specific inflation from the BLS and the compact car price index from Kelley Blue Book. [https://www.kelleybluebook.com/news/releases/average-new-car-prices-up-nearly-4-percent-year-over-year-for-may-2018-according-to-kelley-blue-book-30086713.html](https://www.kbb.com/news/releases/average-new-car-prices-up-nearly-4-percent-year-over-year-for-may-2018-according-to-kelley-blue-book-30086713.html) (Earnings calculation includes employer premium contribution in both health care payments and in earnings total. See Massachusetts HPC 2019 Annual Cost Trends Report (p. 11))



**Many MA residents face difficulty paying health care bills.**



**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

I have spent a good deal of my career promoting health care access. I was the first chief of the Health Care Division in the Massachusetts Attorney General's office, working to ensure that everyone has access to high quality affordable health care. I have also worked as a nonprofit leader in health access for many years. After college, I was the international program manager of a foundation in the Philippines focused on child abuse issues. More recently, I founded an initiative at Harvard University called Global Access in Action that develops actionable strategies for increasing access to medicines for the world's poorest populations. I also played a key role in launching Patents for Humanity, a program within the US Patent & Trademark Office that incentivizes and rewards inventors who use patented inventions to advance humanitarian initiatives such as global public health challenges like HIV-AIDS, malaria, ebola, and COVID-19. I have written extensively on health-related topics. I am a longtime advocate for single payer health care.

Here are a few of my published statements on health care:

Once Again, It Is Time For Massachusetts to Lead the Way on Health Reform

<https://gpalfrey.medium.com/once-again-it-is-time-for-massachusetts-to-lead-the-way-on-health-reform-8bfe66d09d0d>

Don't Price Poor Countries Out of the Market for COVID-19 Vaccines & Treatments

<https://medium.com/berkman-klein-center/dont-price-poor-countries-out-of-the-market-for-covid-19-vaccines-treatments-45aa2bd41180>

*Expanding Access to Medicines & Promoting Innovation: A Practical Approach*, 24 Geo. J. on Poverty L. & Pol'y 161 (2016-2017), available at

<https://blogs.harvard.edu/gaia/files/2017/06/GJPLP-Palfrey-Expanding-Access-to-Medicines.pdf>

Learning from Ebola

<http://www.ip-watch.org/2015/07/14/learning-from-ebola/>

Inventing Solutions to Global Disease & Poverty

<http://patentlyo.com/patent/2014/10/inventing-solutions-poverty.html>

Inventing Solutions to the World's Challenges

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/08/03/inventing-solutions-world-s-challenges>

Rewarding Inventors Who Work to Solve Global Challenges

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/02/08/rewarding-inventors-who-work-solve-global-challenges>

Promoting Global Health by Sharing Knowledge

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/10/26/promoting-global-health-sharing-knowledge>

**2. Single Payer. Do you support legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts, which would guarantee health insurance as a right? (Y/N)**

YES.

**3. Hospital Consolidation. What would you do to bring greater scrutiny to hospital mergers and ensure that patients do not have to travel extraordinary distances for care?**

Healthcare should be about patients, not economics, which is why I am an ardent supporter of Medicare for All. However, in our current system, too many hospital consolidations and mergers have negatively impacted patients and communities. As bigger healthcare systems buy up smaller hospitals, the health of patients is often an afterthought to economics, resulting in fewer options and higher costs and have even resulted in the shuttering of facilities, leaving some parts of Massachusetts more than an hour ride from the nearest hospital.

The Attorney General has oversight of nonprofits to ensure that they are acting in the best interest of the public. I will use this oversight to ensure that proposed consolidations do not have an adverse impact on the patient universe they seek to serve and will scrutinize a proposed merger's impact on cost, quality of care, and impact on communities. The AG also has broad consumer protection powers under 93A that can be relevant even outside of the context of nonprofit institutions.

**4. Reproductive Justice—I. Would you support legislation requiring health insurance plans to cover all pregnancy care, including abortion care, prenatal care, childbirth, and postpartum care, without any kind of cost-sharing? (Y/N)**

YES.

5. **Reproductive Justice—II. Would you support the creation of an uncompensated care program to reimburse abortion providers for services they provide to individuals without other means of paying for care, including those individuals traveling from out of state who would have qualified for MassHealth if they lived in the state? (Y/N)**

YES. We also need to also work with non-profits within our Commonwealth to ensure they have the necessary resources.

6. **Menstrual Equity. Would you support providing access to free menstrual products in schools, shelters, and prisons? (Y/N)**

YES. And I fully support H2354 and S1445 sponsored by Representatives Jay Livingstone and Christine Barber and Senator Pat Jehlen.

7. **Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Crisis pregnancy centers present themselves as information resource centers for pregnant individuals, but instead seek to dissuade individuals from having abortions, often by giving them medical misinformation in addition to moral pressure. What is the role of the AG in countering such misrepresentation and misinformation?**

I commit to using any resources of the AG's office including the website to amplify actual reproductive health care centers and to inform the public of the deceptive practices of crisis pregnancy centers which are not licensed by DPH.

8. **Opioid Crisis. What do you view as the role of the AG in the state's response to the opioid crisis?**

The opioid crisis has devastated families and communities across the Commonwealth. The state must continue to hold accountable the companies and individuals whose lies and unscrupulous behavior played a devastating role in the proliferation of opioids. The war on drugs has been an utter failure. We cannot arrest and incarcerate our way out of a public health crisis. We must dramatically rethink our approach – primarily by investing in prevention and treatment for those struggling with addiction. We must prioritize early intervention and redirection for those most at risk in order to disrupt the school to prison pipeline. We can fund substantial increases in prevention and treatment programs through judgments won in lawsuits against unscrupulous pharmaceutical companies and individuals – as well as a re-prioritization of the public safety and corrections budgets.

9. **Harm Reduction. An essential part of addressing the opioid crisis, safe consumption sites allow medical professionals to respond to overdoses and engage participants in medical and behavioral health services. Would you support the legalization of SCSs? (Y/N)**

YES.

10. **Pandemic Response. How would you evaluate the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What role do you see for the AG in ensuring a better response to future crises?**

While much of the blame for the failure to adequately respond to the COVID-19 pandemic lies squarely on the mismanagement of the Trump administration, Governor Baker was slow in responding and should have been more aggressive in safeguarding public health. He should have acted more quickly and decisively on testing and masking. Decisions on which businesses could remain open seemed to be based on considerations other than sound science and public health (e.g., when casinos, bars, and laser tag were open during periods of significant community spread and no vaccines). All too often, gateway cities and communities of color were hit hardest, in part because of poor planning and lack of state leadership. Future pandemic response should be better coordinated, more just, and more science based.

11. **Community Benefits. As AG, you are responsible for oversight of public charities and hospital community benefits. A few years ago, the AG created a task force to review hospital community benefits and align investment with the social determinants of health. While some hospitals have improved community benefits investment in key areas, overall investment in critical areas such as housing, addiction services, and mental health has not increased. What would you do as Attorney General to encourage greater investment in community benefits by non profit hospitals?**

As chief of the Health Care Division, I had a direct responsibility for the community benefits program alongside the charities division. There are significant opportunities to use the community benefits program to greater effect to incentivize and reward investments in the social determinants of health and overcoming racial disparities in population health, health care access, and health outcomes. In addition to housing, substance use services, and mental health, there is a need for greater attention to obesity, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions that disproportionately affect communities of color.

12. **Health Equity. In 2020, the AG's Office issued a [report](#) on building toward racial justice and equity in health. How would you build on such work?**

As the chief of the health care division in the Attorney General's office, I served as the AG's representative on the governor's commission on racial disparities. There is so much work to be done in this area – from measuring and addressing disparities in population health to addressing access barriers to care to addressing disparities in treatment and outcomes within the health care system itself. There is deep injustice in the fact that race, wealth, and zip code have such a profound impact on health and healthcare. As a major player in health policy in the Commonwealth, as well as the chief civil rights official in the state, the AG has a responsibility to take urgent action to overcome inequities in health. This needs to be a crosscutting priority, and

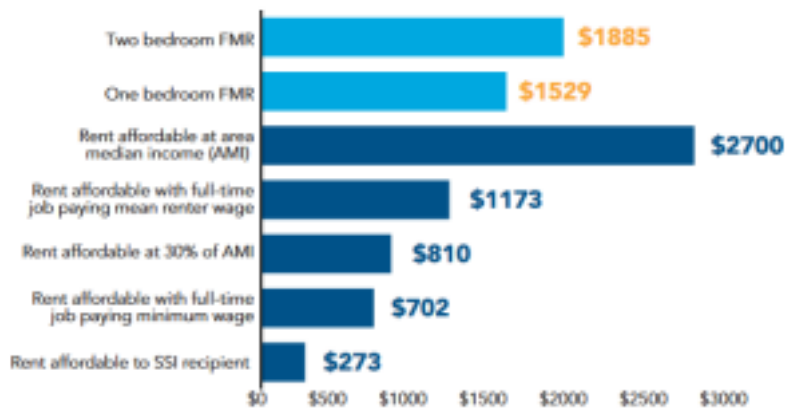


also needs to be aligned with other initiatives to overcome racial injustice in our education system, housing, criminal justice system, our economy, and across all sectors. For example, the single greatest predictor of the health of a child is the educational attainment of the child's mother. So the solution to health equity cannot occur in isolation from other urgently necessary steps to overcome structural racism.

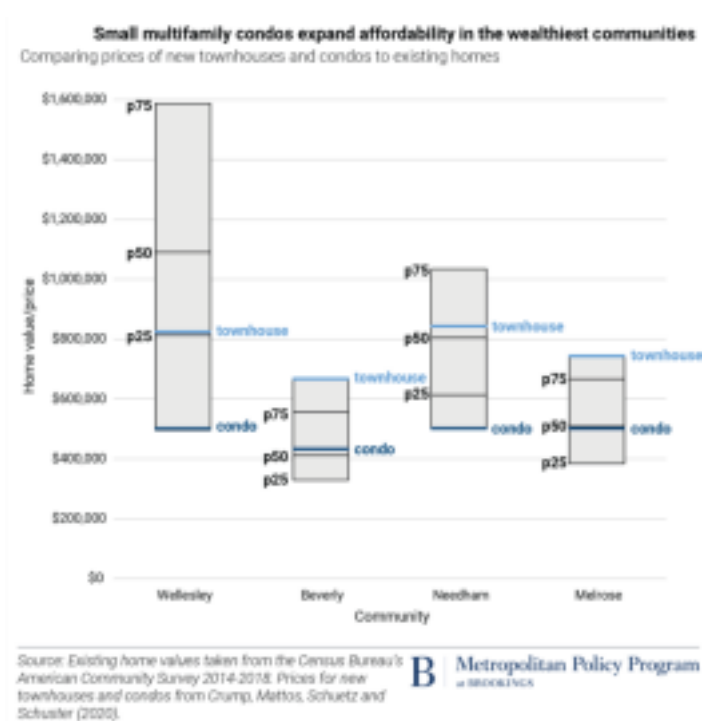
## D. Housing

Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. The [US News & World Report's annual state rankings](#) put Massachusetts at #40 in housing affordability (and #47 in cost of living). A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [87 hours a week](#) to afford a modest one-bedroom rental home at market rate (and 107 hours for a modest two-bedroom). Over the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased at both federal and state levels. This is unsustainable. It has led to expanding economic inequality, increased homelessness, and damage to our economy, as talented workers often leave the state for less expensive regions.

**With rental increases far outpacing wage increases, many are left with housing instability.**



**The overreliance of single-family housing in suburban development, as opposed to denser or multi-family housing, makes communities unaffordable.**



**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

Massachusetts is in a housing crisis. Inventory is decreasing markedly while costs to rent and own are becoming prohibitive. The law currently is tilted in favor of landlords and lenders and I believe we must increase protections for renters and homeowners to level the field.

As a student attorney at the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, I represented low income renters facing eviction in the Massachusetts court. I also published an article in the Harvard Journal on Legislation on how to make federal housing subsidies more equitable. *Federal Housing Subsidies*, 37 Harv. J. Legis. 567 (2000)

As the Executive Director of J-PAL North America (MIT's poverty lab), I worked to develop evidence of what works in homelessness policy, and to ensure that social programs were informed by the best available evidence.

Using consumer protection laws and civil rights to stand up for homeowners and renters is one of the core functions of the AG office. As a former Assistant Attorney General, I've seen first hand how the office can be an effective advocate for housing justice.

**2. Reducing Homelessness. What role can the AG play in reducing the number of individuals experiencing homelessness and addressing the daily indignities and systemic problems unhoused individuals face?**

- Develop Housing Stability unit to crack down on abuses by biggest landlords like Alpha Management
- Use court database to identify tenants at risk of eviction and provide outreach and legal services as early as possible in the process
- Enforce fair housing statutes, including around disabilities (which include mental health and addiction issues)
- Ensure shelter providers are not discriminating against people with substance abuse disorder
- Mitigate and eliminate barriers that people with criminal records face to finding and maintaining affordable housing

3. **Tenant Protections. Would you support legislation to provide municipalities with the authority to implement rent-stabilization regulations, just cause eviction protections, stronger condominium conversion and foreclosure protections, anti-displacement zones, and options to help tenants manage the upfront costs of leasing an apartment? (Y/N)**

YES.

And tenants rights aren't just for folks in big cities. The AG's office should fight for tenants from small towns on Cape Cod all the way to cities like Springfield and Pittsfield in Western Massachusetts who are often forgotten by politicians on Beacon Hill. In a market where tenants are often taken advantage of by landlords, the AG's office should be a place where residents can not only know their rights, but also feel safe in using those rights to protect their homes and families, and they should know the AG's office is behind them.

4. **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase. Would you support legislation to provide tenants of small, medium, and large multifamily properties with right of first refusal when the owner plans to put a building on the market, provided that they can make a bona fide offer to match the asking price in a reasonable period of time? (Y/N)**

YES.

5. **Right to Counsel. Would you support legislation to provide legal representation for low-income tenants in eviction proceedings? (Y/N)**

YES.

6. **Eviction Protections. What would you do to prevent extralegal evictions and other abuses of tenant rights that are a particular problem for immigrants and people who sublet rooms from intermediaries (often referred to as "encargados")?**

- Develop Housing Stability unit to crack down on biggest abuses by landlords like Alpha Management, and to provide training materials to small landlords
- Publish "tenant rights and resources during evictions" document in multiple languages and advocate for changes to state law requiring the document be issued

by any constable serving an eviction, building off of municipal leadership in Somerville (Housing Stability Notification Ordinance) that requires landlords to issue City-developed know-your-rights document to tenants facing eviction

- Update state law to establish a standardized notice to quit form that must be used for all legally enforceable evictions (currently landlords can draft their own notices to quit which provide little information and often conflict with the law)
- Use court filing database to monitor all eviction filings so AGO staff or tenant right to counsel program staff can conduct direct outreach to any tenant-defendant prior to first eviction hearing
- Work in tandem with City Life/ Vida Urbana to prevent evictions and ensure tenant rights
- Use damages received from suing landlords to pay for proactive targeting mailings to rental units in Gateway Cities informing residents of rights and resources relating to eviction - stating clearly that only a judge can evict them

**7. Voucher Discrimination. What would your office do to combat discrimination against individuals with housing vouchers?**

Discrimination against tenants with housing vouchers is illegal and has a devastating impact on low-income people searching for a place to live. As Attorney General, I will use the powers of the office to (1) educate landlords about the legal requirements; (2) identify and investigate violations; and (3) to take enforcement action in the case of violations. I will work to educate small landlords about the prohibition against voucher discrimination, and about the benefits of these programs for tenants and landlords alike. And I will stand ready to use the office's enforcement authority to ensure that the people with housing vouchers can use them to find housing for themselves and their families.

**8. Safe Housing. What would your office do to hold accountable landlords who are repeatedly found to violate the state sanitary code, endanger safety and health of tenants and communities, etc.?**

Work with local organizations like City Life/ Vida Urbana and local tenant unions to file suit against landlords to ensure housing is up to code.

Fight to update state receivership laws to take control of large apartment buildings from landlords who repeatedly fail to address serious code violations; where possible, appoint local community development corporation as receiver; advocate for state funding to increase and preserve affordability in these buildings.

**9. Predatory Lending. What would your office do to address predatory lending practices, such as those that gave rise to the foreclosure crisis of the late 2000s?**

Too many Massachusetts consumers are trapped in a cycle of debt by predatory lenders. During the foreclosure crisis, we watched in horror as predatory subprime lending decimated communities across the Commonwealth, and particularly

BIPOC communities. The Attorney General must act aggressively to prevent these practices from taking hold ever again. I will use the officer's full powers under Chapter 93A to investigate and end predatory practices by mortgage, auto, and small-dollar lenders.

Because predatory lenders often target BIPOC consumers with their abusive products, I also will use the Commonwealth's civil rights statutes to stamp out discriminatory lending. In these challenging economic times, all consumers must be able to access credit that will help them build their lives and their financial futures. They shouldn't have to fear that taking out a loan will lead to financial ruin.

10. **Eviction Sealing. Eviction records create lasting stigma, are prone to error and impair access to stable housing.**

- o **Would you support legislation to seal eviction records so that both tenants and landlords can move on with their lives? (Y/N)**

YES.

- o **Would you support, even without new legislation, forcing the courts to create a process to remove from public online court records the names of minors who are erroneously named as defendants in eviction cases?**

YES.

11. **Discriminatory Zoning. What is the role of the AG in preventing discriminatory zoning and land use practices at the municipal level?**

State and federal laws against racial discrimination can be applied to local government actions that have the effect of being discriminatory, even if race is not explicitly mentioned in the local government action. (Example: [AG Healey's determination that Mystic Valley Regional Charter School's ban on hair extensions was discriminatory to Black students](#)). The same could be applied to reviews of zoning ordinances.

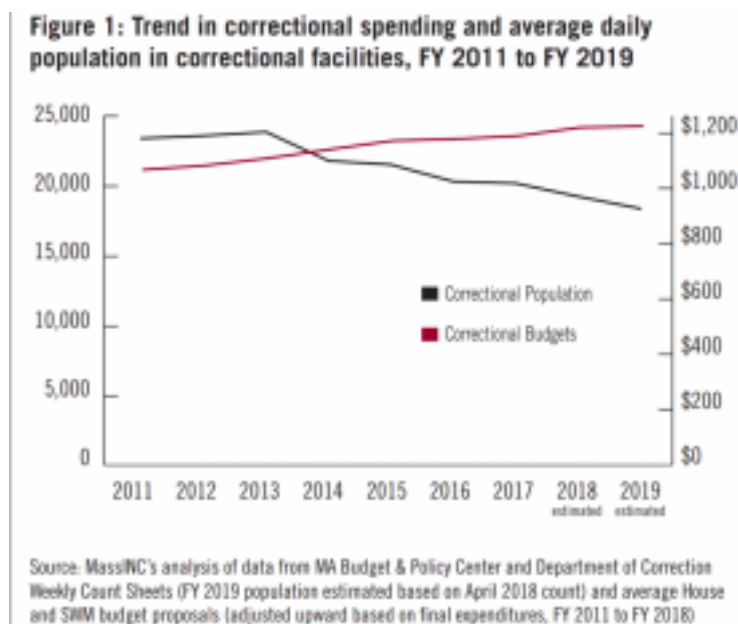
## E. Racial and Social Justice

Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, especially on the systemic and institutional level.

Mass incarceration in Massachusetts has proven socially and economically destructive, breaking apart communities across the state. From 2011 to 2016, [spending on prisons](#) grew faster than any other part of the Massachusetts budget, while funding for necessary services languished. The average cost per year to house an individual in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections is [more than \\$60,000](#), money that could be better reinvested into the communities that have suffered from decades of misguided and racially discriminatory “tough on crime” policies. To achieve “justice for all,” we need a judicial system that does not disproportionately target communities of color and the poor and that does not criminalize public health issues such as addiction.

Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts’s population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. Even though the administration in Washington has changed, we have seen a deportation agenda from both Democratic and Republican presidents, and it is important for states like Massachusetts to take leadership in protecting and advancing the rights of our immigrant communities and making clear that all are welcome.

### **The correctional population in Massachusetts has declined, yet the state continues to increase the Department of Corrections budget.**



**Significant racial disparities exist in incarceration in Massachusetts.**

Imprisonment by Race/Ethnicity (2019)	
White imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	63
Black imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	466
Hispanic imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	260
Racial/Ethnic Disparity in Imprisonment (2019)	
Black : white ratio	7.4
Hispanic : white ratio	4.1
Juveniles in Custody (2015)	
Total juveniles in custody	309
Committed	168
Detained	135
Diverted	0
Juvenile custody rate (per 100,000)	0
White custody rate (per 100,000)	18
Black custody rate (per 100,000)	166
Latino custody rate (per 100,000)	117
American Indian custody rate (per 100,000)	0
Asian custody rate	0

**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

Our criminal justice system is in need of urgent reform. We imprison too many people for too long for doing too little. Race has too much to do with who ends up in our criminal justice system. The consequences of the unfairness of our criminal justice system are profound. Over-incarceration exacerbates cyclical poverty and inequality, and it undermines our efforts to create a more just and equal society.

We should make MA a leader in bold, evidence-based justice reform policies, including an end to qualified immunity for police officers, reducing harsh sentences and sentencing disparities in the state, maintaining strict oversight over the Department of Corrections to ensure that incarcerated people are protected, and maximizing opportunities for decarceration, including expanded and medical parole and pre-sentencing alternatives to incarceration.

Here's a related statement I put out in 2018:

Fixing our Broken Criminal Justice System

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/fixing-our-broken-criminal-justice-system-c5b3176ab8>

[b1](#)

**2. Reform-Minded DAs -- I. The past few years have seen a growing effort for reform in District Attorney Offices around the country. What lessons from such effort would you incorporate into your work as Attorney General?**



I strongly support the efforts of progressive District Attorneys to make innovative use of prosecutorial discretion to address the unacceptable disparities in our criminal legal system. Rachael Rollins in particular has been a leader in this area. One aspect of this approach that I admire is the incorporation of open data into this approach. As we innovate, we should also learn what works and continue to refine our approach to ensure that we are accomplishing the objectives of decreasing injustice and making our communities safe, fair, and thriving. The AG has a more limited direct opportunity than DAs do to implement this approach, but can be a powerful public champion for progressive criminal justice reforms, as well as an impatient advocate for further legislative efforts.

The AG can also walk the walk: limiting our maximum sentences sought to twenty years, standing firm against inhumane policies like the death penalty, and hiring formerly incarcerated people to work in the AG's office and advise us on key criminal legal and justice reform issues. We can also use the power of our office to demonstrate the success of justice reform policies; by being transparent about our process and outcomes, we can demonstrate to the legislature that progressive, bold justice reforms make sense and make us safer.

3. **Reform-Minded DAs -- II. What would you do as Attorney General to support the efforts of reform-minded DAs at the county level to adopt more holistic approaches to public safety?**

As discussed in the answer above, I would use my podium as the people's lawyer to vocally support reform-minded prosecutors and DA candidates, and would work with DAs to hold law enforcement actors and other system agencies accountable for any harm they are causing in their work.

4. **Gang Databases. Would you support municipal efforts to end local police departments' gang databases, which have been documented to be highly inaccurate and racist? (Y/N)**

YES.

5. **Police Accountability. The 2020 police accountability legislation passed by the Massachusetts Legislature contained a number of steps forward, but important measures were left out. Would you support legislation to do the following?**

a. **Eliminating qualified immunity for state and local police and correctional officers so that individuals whose constitutional rights are violated can have their fair day in court? (Y/N)**

YES. I have repeatedly publicly called for eliminating qualified immunity for state and local police and correctional officers, including on television in an interview with Jim Braude.

- b. **Supporting strict regulations on government use of face surveillance like those initially enacted by the House and Senate in 2020, before Governor Baker rejected them? (Y/N)**

YES.

- c. **Requiring a vote by a local legislative body (city council, town meeting) before a municipality can acquire military or surveillance equipment? (Y/N)**

YES.

- d. **Directing an independent investigation of the Massachusetts State Police Commonwealth Fusion Center, to determine whether it has engaged in investigations of protected First Amendment activity or otherwise improperly collected, accessed, or shared information about people not suspected of engaging in criminal activity? (Y/N)**

YES.

- e. **Reforming the law regarding the Civil Service Commission so it no longer has power over the hiring or firing of police officers in Massachusetts? (Y/N)**

YES.

6. **Alternative Crisis Response. Would you support legislation creating a grant program through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to increase funding for non-law-enforcement, unarmed community-based response personnel to respond to emergency calls? (Y/N)**

YES.

7. **Sentencing Reform. The 2018 criminal justice reform bill was an important first step in reducing mass incarceration. However, in our “liberal” state, incarceration rates remain much higher than they are in other countries, and sentencing laws can be even more punitive than those in states viewed as conservative. Do you support the following reforms?**

- a. **Eliminating mandatory minimums for all drug offenses? (Y/N)**

YES.

- b. **Raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21, in line with research that shows that young offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to reoffend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood? (Y/N)**

YES.

- c. **Decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adolescents, by creating an exception to the statutory rape law for youth close in age?** (Y/N)

YES.

- d. **Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application?** (Y/N)

YES.

8. **Civil Asset Forfeiture. Do you agree that Massachusetts civil forfeiture laws do not provide appropriate due process?** (Y/N). **If so, what reforms do you propose?**

YES.

We should wholly eliminate civil forfeiture or ensure that it is only pursued after a conviction has been secured, appeals have been exhausted, and there has been a separate hearing to determine the need and justification for asset forfeiture. Other measures can be taken, including the states' freezing a person's assets, to ensure that wealthy, privileged people do not use non-seized assets to evade accountability.

9. **Solitary Confinement. In Massachusetts, prisoners can be sentenced to 10 years of solitary confinement—per infraction. The UN defines holding someone in solitary confinement for more than 15 days as torture. Do you support banning the use of long-term solitary confinement?** (Y/N)

YES.

10. **Prison Visitation. Maintaining connections with friends and family outside prisons is one of the most important factors in ensuring successful reentry. In March 2018, the DOC severely limited the ability of prisoners to receive visits and the rights of family and friends to visit their loved ones in prison. ([Read more on this here.](#)) Would you advocate for the ending of these restrictions?** (Y/N)

YES.

11. **Prison Profiteering—Part 1. While Massachusetts does not have private prisons, the DOC invites private companies to profit off of the families of prisoners by price gouging inmates who have no alternatives but to buy from the sole providers of goods in prisons. Would you support legislation to prevent the price gouging of inmates by the DOC for necessary items and to require the DOC to adequately supply inmates with the basic requirements necessary for life and maintain good health and hygiene?** (Y/N)

YES.

12. **Prison Profiteering—Part II.** The cost of phone calls can be as high as \$4-\$5 (or more) for 15 minutes of phone time for incarcerated individuals in some parts of Massachusetts. Would you support legislation making phone calls free for incarcerated individuals? (Y/N)

YES.

13. **Prison Moratorium.** Would you support a moratorium on the construction of new prisons and jails in the Commonwealth? (Y/N)

YES.

14. **DOC Reform.** Numerous reports (such as the recent *Falcon* and DOJ reports) have highlighted a culture of unchecked institutional violence in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. What is the role of the AG in protecting the rights of those incarcerated and in changing the culture of the DOC?

The Massachusetts Department of Correction -- a \$750 million agency overseeing sixteen facilities across the state, including nine prisons – needs more oversight and accountability. In a recent visit to MCI Norfolk, legislators found that the Department was failing to protect incarcerated people. As Attorney General I will take the following steps to tackle these issues.

- Oversight on conditions – create a dedicated unit within the AG office to independently investigate complaints against the Department of Corrections, including accusations of inhumane conditions in state prisons and county jails, incidents of overcrowding, unjust punishment, denial of health care and denial of access to educational programming. Work with the Department of Corrections to ensure full compliance with existing laws and policies.
- Ensuring personal safety, health care—including addiction programs—and providing incarcerated people with education and job training programs that will aid in their reintroduction to society and help reduce recidivism.
- We must be more diligent and proactive in identifying and treating mental health issues of the incarcerated.
- Create an advisory panel of formerly incarcerated persons to advise AG on correctional reform and criminal justice reform issues.
- Helping incarcerated people to vote
- Reducing the cost of phone calls

15. **Clemency.** Would you support pardoning all individuals convicted of nonviolent cannabis offenses, whether formerly or currently incarcerated, as Senators Warren and Markey have called on President Biden to do? (Y/N)

YES. As well as for other unduly harsh sentences that stem from the failed “war-on-drugs.”

16. **Safe Communities Act.** Do you support the Safe Communities Act, which limits

**local and state police collaboration with federal immigration agents, bars law enforcement and court personnel from inquiring about immigration status, and ensures due process protections? (Y/N)**

YES. also see Standing up for Families this Father's Day

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/standing-up-for-families-this-fathers-day-44fa10e2c3a0>

**17. Work and Family Mobility Act. Do you support removing immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit? (Y/N)**

YES.

**18. Data Equity. Do you support allowing state agencies to collect, organize, and assemble public data on major ethnic subgroups for all racial groups to create more visibility for the diverse experiences within communities and enable policymakers and community organizations to be more responsive to community needs? (Y/N)**

YES.

**19. Combating Gun Violence. As Attorney General, what would you do to improve our state's efforts in preventing gun violence?**

Massachusetts has been a leader in the fight against gun violence and our efforts have been successful in a relative sense. But there is so much more to be done. As AG, I will prioritize these efforts, including:

- Continuing AG's effort to hold gun manufacturers accountable
- increase focus on ghost guns / 3D printed guns, which can be hard to regulate (I have some direct experience in this area from my work in the US Department of Commerce)
- working with neighboring states on interstate transportation of guns not legal in MA
- heightening focus on armories
- increasing investment in suicide prevention efforts and mental health resources.

Here is a statement I put out on gun violence issues in 2018, that gives some sense of my priorities in this area:

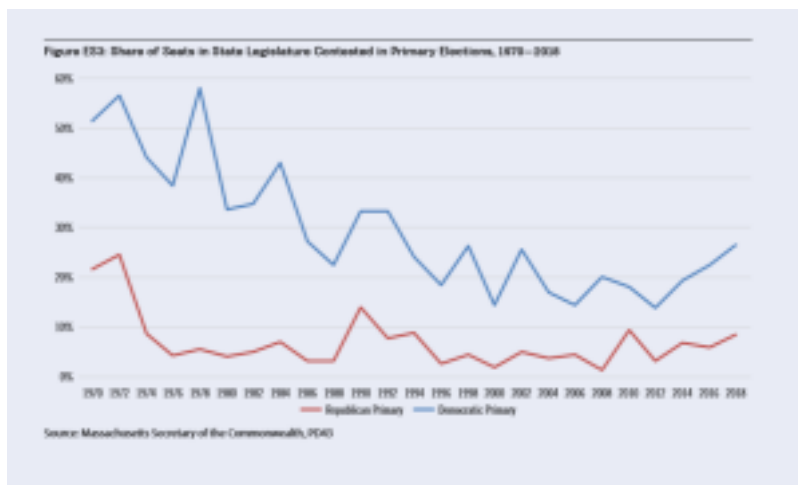
<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/never-again-fb624311e870>

## F. Good Government and Strong Democracy

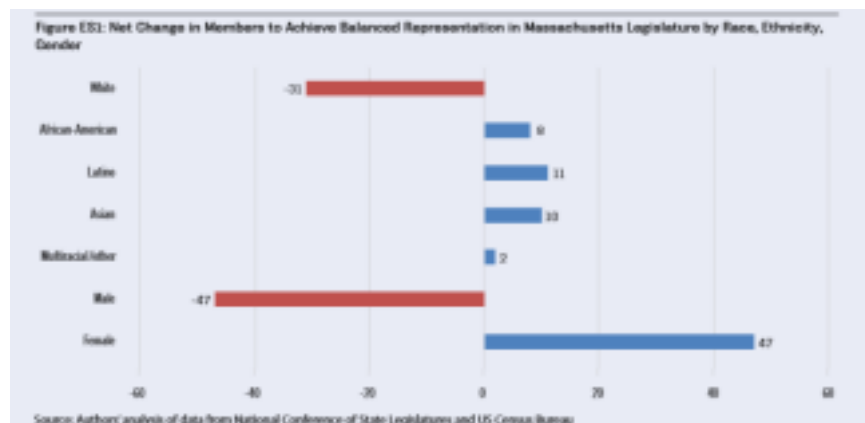
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine the system. Despite recent reforms, a weak public records system stymies government accountability: MA is one of only two states where all three branches of state government claim to be exempt. A strong democracy requires an engaged electorate, but voter turnout in midterm elections, and especially local elections, remains low. Although election modernization legislation in 2014 and 2018 helped bring much-needed reforms, we still lag behind states in New England and around the country in making voting accessible (Maine, for instance, has allowed for Election Day Registration since the 1970s).

A centralized power system, a skewed campaign finance system, and restrictive voting laws together help create a situation in which our elections are the [least competitive in the country](#).

**Our elections have grown less competitive over the past four decades.**



**Our legislature is not reflective of the population as a whole.**



**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

I have spent a good deal of my career on efforts to protect our democracy. I have been a national leader in voter protection efforts since 2004 and have led battleground state voter protection programs at the national level for the past five presidential cycles. I founded a national nonprofit organization called the Voter Protection Corps. And I have written and spoken widely on the need for reforms to improve our democracy.

Massachusetts has been a leader in so many areas, but we are not currently a leader in democracy. The Commonwealth must be more accountable to the people. Massachusetts ranks 46th in the country on government transparency which is unacceptable in a state that prides itself on being a progressive leader.

The legislature must proactively take steps to be more responsive to the public by taking more roll call votes and publishing the results—voters have the right to know how their elected representatives are voting on legislation that will impact their lives. The legislature must also repeal exemptions that allow it and the executive branch to shield documents from the public, and it must implement real election reform, because our democracy is strongest when the largest number of people participate. By making it easier for people to vote the effect will be to have elected officials more accountable to the people. We must allow for election day voter registration, make vote by mail permanent, and allow early voting for all elections.

Here are a few things I have written recently on voting rights:

<https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/3-steps-mass-should-take-to-boost-voting-rights/>

<https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2020/08/18/election-2020-vote-by-mail-quentin-palfrey-mike-firestone>

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/defense-against-the-dark-arts-in-the-2020-election-ef7f42417a1f>

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/states-must-take-bold-action-to-protect-our-elections-from-covid-suppression-88b43549c31e>

**2. Anti-Corruption. What would your office's priorities be in investigating and prosecuting public corruption?**

The AG Office should be more aggressive in enforcing Massachusetts laws to ensure that everyone can trust that the elected officials serving us – and those running for office – are doing so in the public interest.

**3. Campaign Finance. What would your office's priorities be in enforcing campaign finance laws?**

I strongly believe that the US Supreme Court erred in *Buckley v. Valeo* and *Citizens*

United, and that our campaign system has profoundly corrupted our politics.

I am a strong supporter of a 28th amendment to restore a democracy in which we the people—not big money, not corporations, not special interests – hold political power.

Our democracy is built on the principle of one person, one vote, something that has been greatly undermined by Citizens United, which has given undue influence to corporate and special interests in our electoral process. One of the consequences of Citizens United has been that it has opened the floodgates for special interest money to corrupt our electoral process.

<https://qpalfrey.medium.com/lets-pass-a-constitutional-amendment-to-overturn-citizens-united-f0bf12a1c1c3>

4. **Public Records Law -- I. Massachusetts is the only state where the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Judiciary claim full exemptions from the public records laws. Would you support eliminating these exemptions? (Y/N)**

YES.

5. **Public Records Law -- II. How would your office strengthen enforcement of the state's public records law?**

The AG office should encourage government clients to be forward leaning in response to requests for public records. Transparency is a public good and the AG should set a tone of cooperation and prompt compliance with public records requests. Strategic delay tactics should not be tolerated.

6. **Voting Access. Massachusetts lags behind other states in making voting accessible for all. Do you support eliminating Massachusetts's arbitrary and exclusionary 20-day voter registration cutoff and allowing voters to register or update their registration at the polls on Election Day and during the early voting period? (Y/N)**

YES. I have been a vocal proponent of election day registration in Massachusetts for almost two decades.

7. **Jail-Based Voting. Individuals incarcerated with non-felony convictions maintain the right to vote, but that right often does not exist in practice. What would your office do to protect the voting rights of incarcerated individuals?**

I would have the Civil Rights Division work with the Secretary of State's Office and the Department of Corrections to ensure that all incarcerated individuals who wish to vote have the ability to cast a ballot as easily as possible.

8. **Voting Rights Restoration. Would you support restoring the franchise to incarcerated individuals serving time for felony convictions (Their right to vote**



**was taken away by ballot twenty years ago)? (Y/N)**

YES.

**9. Reining in Big Tech. Tech companies have outsized power, threatening both individual rights and our democratic process. What would you do to rein in the power of big tech and to empower ordinary users of modern technologies to assert control over their privacy and personal information?**

Massachusetts should pass a consumer privacy bill of rights. During my time in the Obama Administration, I played an active role in developing the Obama administration's legislative proposal to set clear ground rules and effective enforcement of consumer protection on the internet. In conjunction with Sen. Leahy, we filed a bill that did not pass. Since that time, I have founded a nonprofit organization, which I still run, called the International Digital Accountability Council, that investigates consumer protection violations on the Internet. While I still believe that Congress should pass baseline privacy protections, state legislation is sorely needed to remedy these problems. Massachusetts should follow California's lead and pass a consumer-friendly privacy bill. In the meantime, the Massachusetts AG office is one of the leading consumer protection voices on the national level. As AG, I would enhance this line of work – consumer protection in 2022 needs to focus on digital harms as well as analog ones. I have written and spoken extensively in this area. Some recent examples include:

Internet Privacy: Protecting Consumers, Building Trust, Creating Jobs

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/02/24/internet-privacy-protecting-consumers-building-trust-creating-jobs>

Wanted: New Tools to Tame the Wild West of the Internet

<https://medium.com/berkman-klein-center/wanted-new-tools-to-tame-the-wild-west-of-the-internet-126bb58ac639>

Rebuilding Trust in the Digital Ecosystem

<https://www.gmfus.org/news/rebuilding-trust-digital-ecosystem-new-mechanisms-accountability>

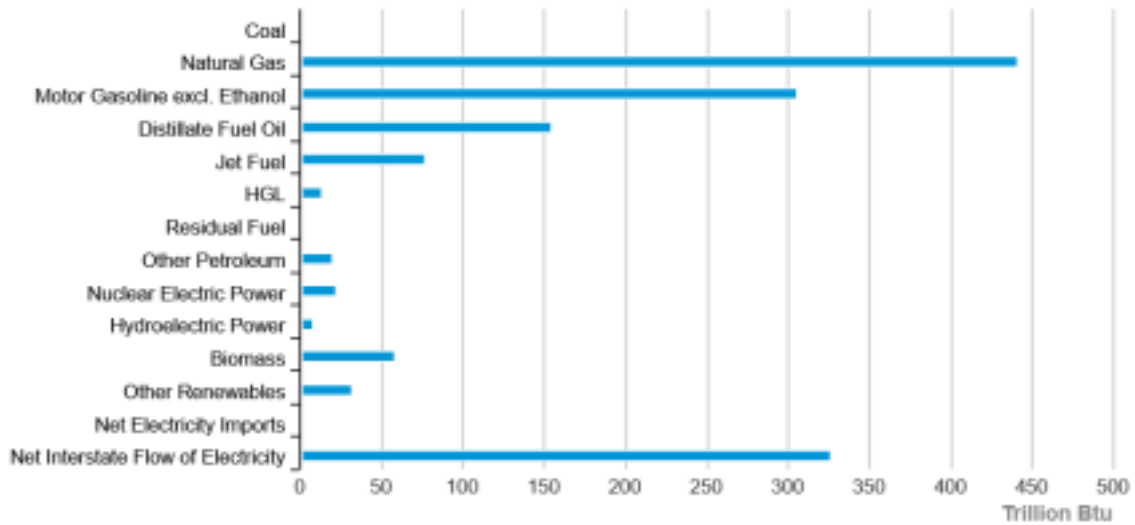
## G. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

As a coastal state, Massachusetts will be hit particularly hard by climate change, but we are not responding with the necessary urgency. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions need to be [halved by 2030](#) and brought to net zero by 2050, and affluent countries and states must go further. In 2016, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state has failed to meet its legal obligation to set and enforce annual limits on greenhouse gas emissions as outlined in the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act. Setting and reaching these goals will require the decarbonization of our state economy and a transition away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable sources of energy. In light of congressional gridlock at the federal level, state government must take a role in incentivizing reduced carbon usage and assisting in coordination between agencies and moving forward local government understanding of looming climate threats.

Public transit must play a role in decarbonizing our transportation system, as well as advancing complementary goals of equity and inclusion. However, Massachusetts politicians have lost their understanding of public transit as a public good that benefits all residents and businesses in Massachusetts, not just those who use it in their daily lives. The greatest evidence of this is their neglect of the MBTA: its debt has grown to nearly [\\$5 billion](#), and it would need [more than \\$10 billion](#) to bring infrastructure and equipment up to a state of good repair. Regional Transit Authorities that serve communities, including Gateway Cities across the state, face enormous capital needs as well.

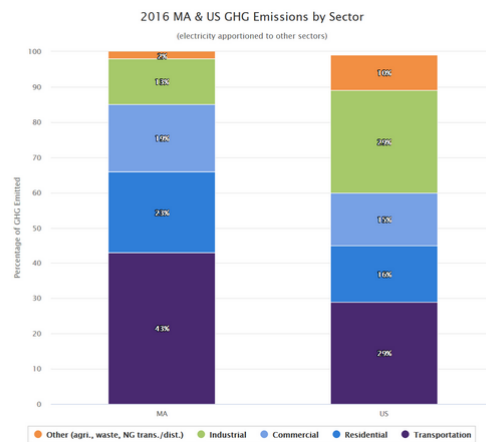
**Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.** PAGE

## Massachusetts Energy Consumption Estimates, 2019



Source: Energy Information Administration, State Energy Data System

**Transportation is currently the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in MA.**



(Source: <http://www.mass.gov>)

**1. Please explain your principles and proposals relative to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

The climate crisis is causing devastating consequences. What we do now – or fail to do – will determine the future of Massachusetts, as well as what kind of a life our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will live.

As a candidate for Massachusetts Attorney General, the fight against the climate crisis will be one of my top priorities. With dysfunction in Washington, there is an urgent need for Massachusetts to lead. It is very encouraging to see our leaders on Beacon Hill take up measures to accelerate the transition to a clean energy economy. By investing in wind, solar, and other renewable sources of energy, we will fight the climate crisis, compete against China, and pave the way for the jobs and industries of the future.

The Massachusetts Attorney General's office has a long history of fighting for environmental protection, from the landmark Supreme Court case *Massachusetts v. EPA* to suing Exxon Mobil for deceptive practices to lawsuits against reckless Trump Administration policies. As Attorney General, I will continue in this proud tradition of environmental protection, bring renewed urgency to the fight against climate change, and vigorously protect the fragile natural resources of Massachusetts <https://qpalfrey.medium.com/massachusetts-deserves-a-governor-lieutenant-governor-who-will-lead-in-the-fight-against-climate-2d2b840257b0> .

**2. Next Generation Roadmap. At the start of this legislative session, the Legislature passed a bill that requires gross emissions reductions of 50% from 1990 levels by 2030, 75% by 2040, and at least 85% by 2050, as well as net zero by 2050. What do you view as the role of the AG in enforcing this law?**

On Day One in the Attorney General's Office, I will issue a memorandum instructing all divisions of the office to develop a strategic plan to make fighting the climate crisis a top priority. The AG has numerous opportunities to lead in the transition to a clean energy economy – from enforcing the law against polluters to working with the energy sector on a transition to sustainable sources of energy to overseeing utilities to fighting for environmental justice to counseling government agencies, the AG can have a profound impact on the climate.

**3. Just Transition. Do you support the creation of a Just Transition Office to assist workers that are displaced in the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy? (Y/N)**

YES.

**4. Office of Ratepayer Advocacy. The Office of the Attorney General has a dedicated unit, called the Office of Ratepayer Advocacy, that participates in dockets at the Department of Public Utilities, particularly on behalf of residential utility ratepayers. How do you envision using this office to protect customers while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and modernizing our energy systems?**

The Attorney General represents consumers in all matters relating to the cost and delivery of natural gas and energy before both state and federal regulators. Profitable energy companies must not be allowed to increase rates simply to increase profitability. Further, as we work to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 any

rate increase must include a carbon offset with the requesting entity introducing new, carbon free renewable power into the grid.

**5. Transitioning Away from Fossil Gas. How will your office ensure that utility companies stop investing in gas pipes to the tune of 20 billion and instead focus on repairing leaks and equitably transitioning to non-emitting renewable thermal and efficient electric technologies?**

Climate change is an existential threat and we must transition to renewable energy. New fossil fuel infrastructure is a direct challenge to our ability to lessen the impacts of climate change. As Attorney General I will oppose the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure and instead advocate for the repair to existing infrastructure (the repair of leaks), increased efficiency in transmission, and the construction of new, renewable infrastructure such as offshore and onshore wind, solar, and geothermal.

**6. Gas Leaks. A Harvard study showed that there is 6 times more atmospheric methane than what is calculated by gas utilities and the DEP because they use outdated leak factors and national leak ratios. What would you do to ensure that our emissions accounting is accurate given our leaky gas system?**

These leaks are environmental hazards, present risks to personal health and safety, and result in greater costs to ratepayers. The Commonwealth must maintain a comprehensive and up to date accounting of gas leaks. Utilities must be responsible for the cost associated with the creation and maintenance of this data set. We must set firm deadlines for the repair of these leaks and hold utilities accountable for failure to comply.

**7. Fossil Fuel Infrastructure. Do you oppose the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in the state? (Y/N) If so, what steps would you take to do so?**

YES.

The Attorney General has a variety of tools to oppose the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure. In some specific instances, there are legal or regulatory questions that arise, as to which the AG may have a direct role. But the AG also has a powerful public platform to oppose projects and to call on the governor, the legislature, the federal government, or local officials to act. Sometimes it is as simple as vocally opposing a project, as I have with Holtec's plan to dump radioactive water into Cape Cod Bay; the Weymouth compressor station; and the Joint Base Cape Cod's plans to build a machine gun range that will pollute the water and damage fragile ecosystems on Cape Cod.

**8. Utility Influence. Throughout the country, scandal after scandal has revealed how investor-owned utilities shape our energy and environmental laws to their private advantage, instead of the public interest. In Massachusetts, studies have shown how our utilities [spend](#) major money on political influence, through lobbying, donations, and [revolving door hiring practices](#) between state**

**government and the utilities. How would you work to level the playing field and stop the utilities' shady tactics?**

The Citizens United Case has opened the floodgates for special interest and dirty money to influence our elections. If the federal government refuses to act, we must take legislative steps here in Massachusetts to ban the influence of special interest money and corporate money in elections and get back to the principle of one person, one vote. I strongly support a 28th amendment to return power to the people.

**9. Environmental Justice. What would your office do to ensure compliance with environmental justice protections by both state agencies and private companies?**

The AG's Office should provide more resources to the Environmental Crimes Strike Force to investigate and prosecute violations of environmental laws and task the Strike Force with reviewing proposed projects through a lens of environmental justice to ensure compliance with our carbon emissions goals and to ensure that communities are not targeted to carry more than their fair share of environmental impact.

**10. Free Public Transit. Do you support making public transit in the Commonwealth fare-free? (Y/N)**

YES.

Our transportation system is inefficient, outdated, and too expensive. We must make significant investments in this system to encourage usage and take more cars off the road.

### III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

***Limit answer to 150 words or fewer.***

Use this space to add any other issues important to your vision for Massachusetts or any other matter you think progressive voters should know about your candidacy.

Our values are under attack at the federal level. With a conservative Supreme Court in place for the foreseeable future, Roe v. Wade, LGBTQ rights and other progressive gains we have made hang in the balance. As Attorney General of Massachusetts I view it as my duty not only to stand up against this assault on our values at the federal level but also to ensure that the Commonwealth continues to forge a path forward on issues related to fairness, equity and inclusion. While Massachusetts has led the way on so much of the progressive advances in our country, we still have much work to do.

