



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2023 Legislative Special Election
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: 03/21/2023

Candidate: Robert Orthman

Office Sought: State Representative, 10th Suffolk District

Party: Democrat

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

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.

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

Issue Subsections:

- A. Revenue and Taxation
- B. Jobs and the Economy
- C. Education
- D. Health Care
- E. Housing
- F. Racial and Social Justice
- G. Good Government and Strong Democracy
- H. 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?

I am running because I feel a strong sense of urgency to address the major issues facing our district and state. We need bold leaders in the State House who not only vote the right way but serve as loud advocates for our progressive principles. My top three priorities if elected will be to make housing more available and more affordable, to stabilize and properly invest in the MBTA, and to support our public school students and teachers.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I have been a community leader in Roslindale for over a decade on housing and transportation. I am a board member of WalkUP Roslindale, a local advocacy group of residents and small business owners focused on creating more sustainable and walkable communities. I have negotiated with developers to build needed housing while successfully obtaining more income-restricted units and community benefits. I was a lead organizer in creating Boston's first rapid bus lane in decades between Roslindale Square and Forest Hills. In my professional life, I am an attorney at the Department of Early Education and Care where I focus on providing more affordable and available child care to families across the state, especially lower income families. I am deeply invested in our public schools as a Boston Public Schools (BPS) graduate, parent to a BPS student, and brother to a public high school teacher in a suburban community.

3. What do you view as the biggest obstacles to passing progressive policy at the state level, and how do you plan to overcome these obstacles?

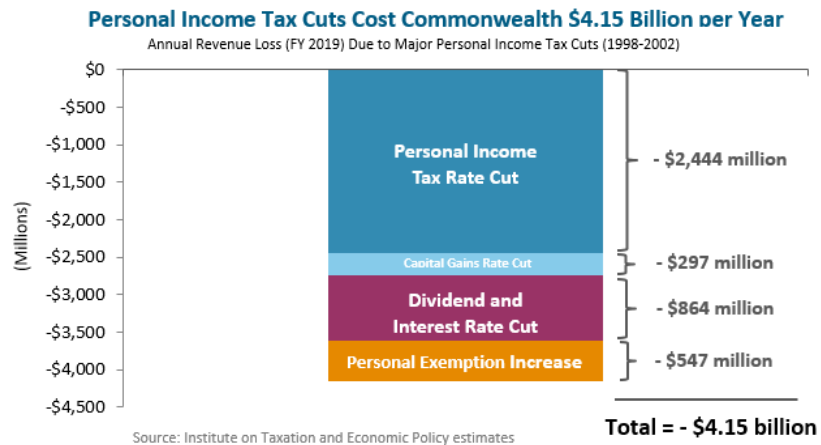
In my view, the biggest obstacle to passing progressive policy at the state level is a lack of transparency in the Legislature. That lack of transparency allows special interests to kill or bury progressive bills and good policy that garner strong support from the public. If elected, I have committed to running a transparent and accountable office. I will publish my own committee votes and will vote to make committee votes public so residents can see what their legislators are doing. I will also regularly update my constituents on the votes I take and rationale behind them so my constituents can hold me accountable and know what I am doing on their behalf.

II. The Issues

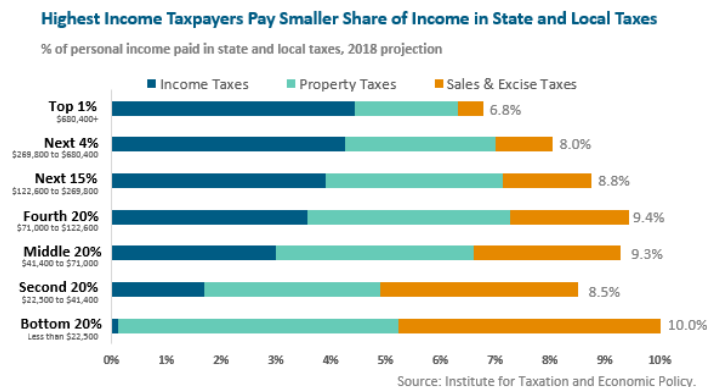
A. Revenue and Taxation

Between 1977 and 2016, Massachusetts [reduced state taxes](#) by more than all but two other states. Because of income tax cuts enacted between 1998 and 2002, Massachusetts loses over \$4 billion in tax revenue *each year*—\$4 billion that is not invested in our roads, bridges, schools, parks, and services, all of which have historically been part of why MA is a great place to live. Such cuts to the state income tax, combined with [low corporate income taxes compared to other states](#), have meant increasing reliance on fees, as well as sales, gas, and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressivity of the system. Regressive taxation strains low- and middle-income families, and reduced revenue collection curtails our ability to invest in vital infrastructure. It also restricts legislators' ability—and willingness—to pass new and visionary legislation, as there is a continual shortage of funds for existing priorities.

Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.



Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.



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.).

My core principle is that we must sufficiently invest in public goods and move towards a more progressive tax system in Massachusetts. We need a working public transportation system, more abundant and affordable housing, and child care that is available and not the most expensive in the country like it is now. None of these things can be accomplished by cutting taxes. I was a public supporter of the Fair Share Amendment and campaigned for its passage last year while supporting Democratic candidates. I believe we need to go further to establish a fair, progressive income tax structure like the federal government has used for over a century.

2. Corporate Tax Breaks. Corporate tax breaks cost Massachusetts [more than \\$1 billion in foregone revenue](#) each year. Companies can secure access to such tax breaks due to political connections whether or not the promised benefits ever materialize. Which of the following accountability steps would you support?

- a. Repealing any tax break that does not provide the intended benefits in a cost-effective manner? (Y/N) Yes
- b. Establishing sunset dates for all tax breaks so that they must come up for periodic review? (Y/N) Yes

3. Progressive Revenue. In order to accomplish many of the items in a progressive agenda, we will need more revenue. Do you support the following measures to make a more progressive tax code?

- a. Raising the corporate minimum tax for larger companies? (The corporate minimum tax is currently only \$456.) (Y/N) Yes
- b. Imposing a tax on the portion of corporations' US profits that are shifted to offshore tax havens? (Y/N) Yes
- c. Raising the corporate tax rate from 8% to 9.5% (where it stood in 2009)? (Y/N) Yes
- d. Levying a modest tax on university endowments greater than \$1 billion? (Y/N) Yes

4. Protecting the Fair Share Win. Last fall, voters approved a measure to increase taxes on income over \$1 million and devote the revenue toward public education and transportation. It's vital that we protect the revenue raised from tax avoidance or diversion to tax cuts. Would you support the following...?

- a. Requiring couples who file jointly in their federal taxes to do so as well in Massachusetts? Yes
- b. Protecting Fair Share revenue from the application of 62F (the 1986 "tax cap law" that was triggered in 2022)? Yes

5. PILOT Reform. Massachusetts is home to some of the world's most prestigious cultural, educational, and medical institutions, but many of them are exempt from

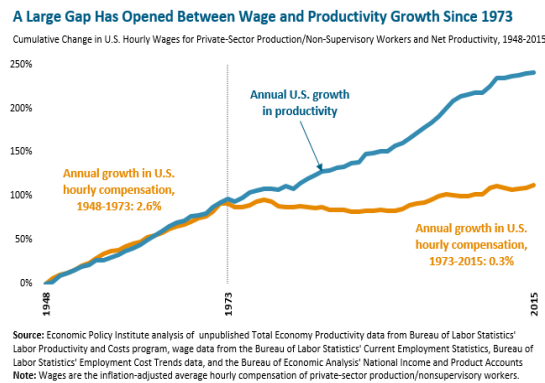
property taxes. Do you support enabling cities and towns to require large tax-exempt not-for-profit institutions (i.e., with property valued at or above \$15 million) to make payments in lieu of taxes to the municipality equal to 25 percent of the amount that would be paid if they were not exempt? (Y/N) Yes

B. 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.

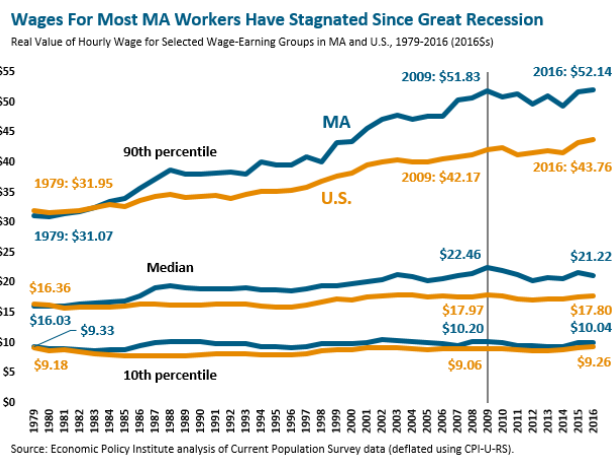
In recent decades, unions have been under attack. However, unions played—and continue to play—a pivotal role in creating a strong middle class. With weaker unions (or no unions at all) come weaker social and economic rights and an imbalanced economy.

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



<https://archive.massbudget.org/reports/swma/>

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



<https://archive.massbudget.org/reports/swma/wages-income.php>

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 am a strong supporter of unions. My sister is a public school teacher and proud member of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). My grandfather was a proud member of the Boston Carmen's Union as an MBTA laborer for decades after immigrating to the United States from Italy in the 1950s. My family was able to move into the middle class because of union wages and benefits. I have never forgotten that and will always support the right to collective bargaining and living wages.

2. **Livable Wages.** Although Massachusetts now has a \$15 minimum wage, that is still not a living wage in much of Massachusetts, and \$15 has lost a lot of value due to high inflation. Do you support the following steps...?
- a. Raising the minimum wage to \$20 per hour? (Y/N) Yes
 - b. Eliminating subminimum wages? (Y/N) Yes
 - c. Ensuring that the minimum wage law applies to municipal workers? (Y/N) Yes
 - d. Indexing the minimum wage to inflation? (Y/N) Yes
3. **Wage Theft.** Do you support holding businesses responsible for the wage violations of their subcontractors when the work they do is substantially connected to the company's operations? (Y/N) Yes
4. **Wage Transparency.** Would you support 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
5. **Mandatory Arbitration.** Would you support legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory arbitration provisions in employment contracts, i.e., requirements that an employee forfeit the right to sue the employer for discrimination, nonpayment of wages, or other illegal conduct? (Y/N) Yes
6. **Paid Leave for Municipal Workers.** In 2018, MA passed the strongest paid family and medical leave law in the country. However, the law did not include municipal workers. Would you support extending the law to make sure that municipal workers have access to these vital benefits? (Y/N) Yes
7. **Right to Strike.** Would you support legislation to legalize the right to strike for public employees (with the exception of public safety personnel) after six months of failed negotiations with their employer? Yes
8. **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. Will you oppose all legislation that weakens Massachusetts's labor law protecting employees from being misclassified as "independent contractors"? (Y/N) Yes
9. **State House as a Workplace.** Although the Legislature voted in 2017 to increase legislators' pay, the Legislature has not taken necessary steps to ensure staff are being

properly compensated. Staff are often overworked and underpaid, leading to burnout and making it difficult for the State House to retain diverse talent.

- a. Do you support the unionization effort of the Massachusetts State House Employee Union? (Y/N) Yes
- b. If elected, are you committed to creating a safe work environment for all of your employees in which harassment, especially sexual harassment, is not tolerated? (Y/N) Yes
- c. Do you support the creation of an independent commission to investigate and report on complaints of workplace and sexual harassment in the Massachusetts Legislature? (Y/N) Yes

C. Education

Public education plays a fundamental role in democracy, cultivating informed, well-rounded community members and providing the knowledge and skills needed for economic mobility and opportunity. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country, with significant opportunity and resource divides based on income and race. In 2019, Massachusetts passed the Student Opportunity Act to update the formula for state aid to public school districts and correct these inequities, but schools have faced added strains due to pandemic.

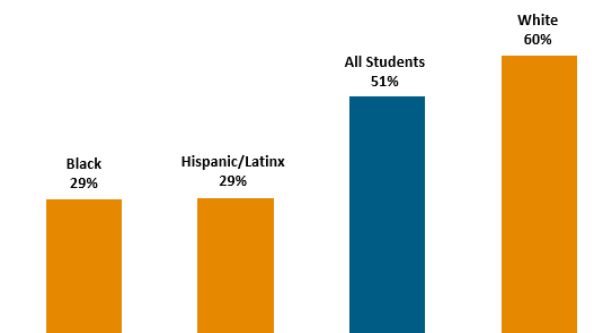
Public education has also been under attack by powerful corporate interests seeking to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups invest millions of dollars to promote the expansion of privately run charter schools, which siphon money from our public K-12 districts while largely excluding 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 take power away from communities and often facilitate privatization schemes that could never achieve democratic support.

At the same time, our understanding of education has also broadened. No longer do we only talk about K-12 education; rather, most of the [fastest-growing occupations](#) require education beyond a high school diploma. Massachusetts has been disinvesting from public higher education for the past two decades, leading to higher tuition costs and putting students at risk of long-term debt (if they are even still able to attend). Our public colleges and opportunities are an economic engine for local economies as well as a pathway to economic opportunity, and when that opportunity is cut off for students, we all lose out.

Massachusetts has significant achievement gaps reflective of resource gaps.

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

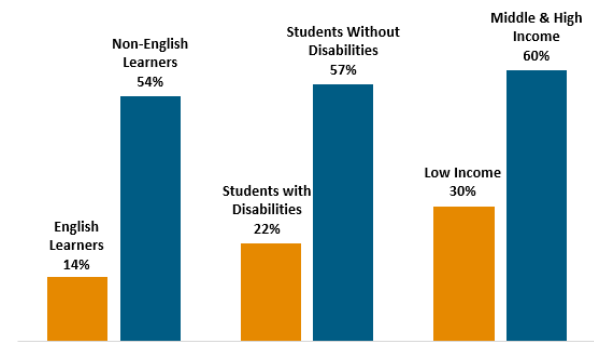
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

Massachusetts Has 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



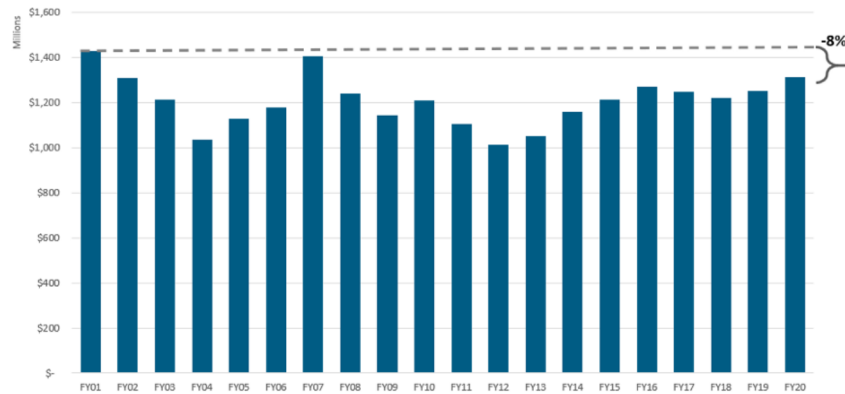
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

https://archive.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Towards-Equity-School-Funding-Reform-in-Massachusetts.html

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

Massachusetts Has Cut Spending on Higher Ed. by 8 Percent Since FY 2001

State spending on higher education, FY 2001-2020 adjusted to inflation (2020 \$)



Note: FY 2007 total is adjusted downwards to account for the fact that significant funding during this year was for capital investments that supported activity during other fiscal years.

- 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 believe every child deserves and should receive the kind of education that students in our wealthiest communities receive. I am a Boston Public Schools (BPS) graduate and the parent of a current BPS student. I am deeply committed on a personal and policy level to public education. I currently work in the Department of Early Education and Care. One of my primary responsibilities is to ensure that lower-income families receive available and affordable child care through financial assistance. I helped rewrite regulations and policy to streamline that assistance and provide care to families more quickly and efficiently.

- Early Education and Child Care.** Do you support the [Common Start Coalition's proposal](#) to establish a robust system of high-quality, affordable early education and care for children from birth through age 5, as well as after- and out-of-school time for children ages 5-12, and for children with special needs through age 15? (Y/N) Yes
- Standardized Testing.** Massachusetts is now one of just 8 states for which an assessment like the MCAS is a condition for graduation. Would you support ending this requirement and allow students, especially students with disabilities, to have several pathways to demonstrate that they have met required competency standards? (Y/N) Yes
- Charter Schools.** 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. Would you support legislation to bring greater accountability to charter schools by requiring them to adhere to the same disclosure and disciplinary standards and offer the same support for English Language Learners and students with disabilities as public school districts? (Y/N) Yes
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. I publicly opposed the attempt to place the Boston Public Schools in receivership and will continue to oppose any and all attempts to do so in the future.

6. **Comprehensive Sex Education.** Do you support requiring public schools that teach sexual health education to provide age-appropriate, medically accurate information that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities and includes topics such as consent and the effective use of contraception? (Y/N) Yes
7. **Anti-Racist Education.** Curricula that reflects students' lived experiences and actively engages them in antiracism is crucial for students today. Would you support legislation that incentivizes districts to develop Ethnic Studies programs? (Y/N) Yes
8. **Higher Education Access.** Do you support granting in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students? (Y/N) Yes
9. **Debt-Free College.** Do you support making tuition (and mandatory curriculum fees) free at public colleges and universities? (Y/N) Yes

D. 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 Kelly Blue Book.

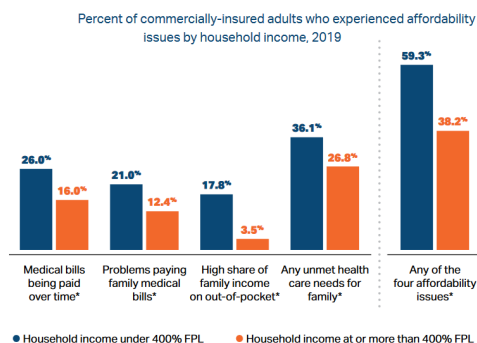
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/average-new-car-prices-up-nearly-4-percent-year-over-year-for-may-2019-according-to-kelley-blue-book-300860710.html>

Earnings calculation includes employer premium contribution in both health care payments and in earnings total. See Massachusetts HPC 2019 Annual Cost Trends Report (p. 15)



Image411

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 believe healthcare is a right and should be universal in Massachusetts and the United States. While Massachusetts has done more than most states, we should be a leader in establishing a single payer system here so that every resident is covered and can access our world-class healthcare institutions and hospitals. When I was in law school, I was published in the Journal of Health and Biomedical Law on the topic of buffer zones outside reproductive health clinics. I wrote about their constitutionality in the face of attacks by right-wing attorneys and activists. Unfortunately, the right-wing controlled Supreme Court struck down Massachusetts's reasonable buffer zone law not long after. I remain a strong supporter of reproductive health and will fight to expand those rights here in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision.

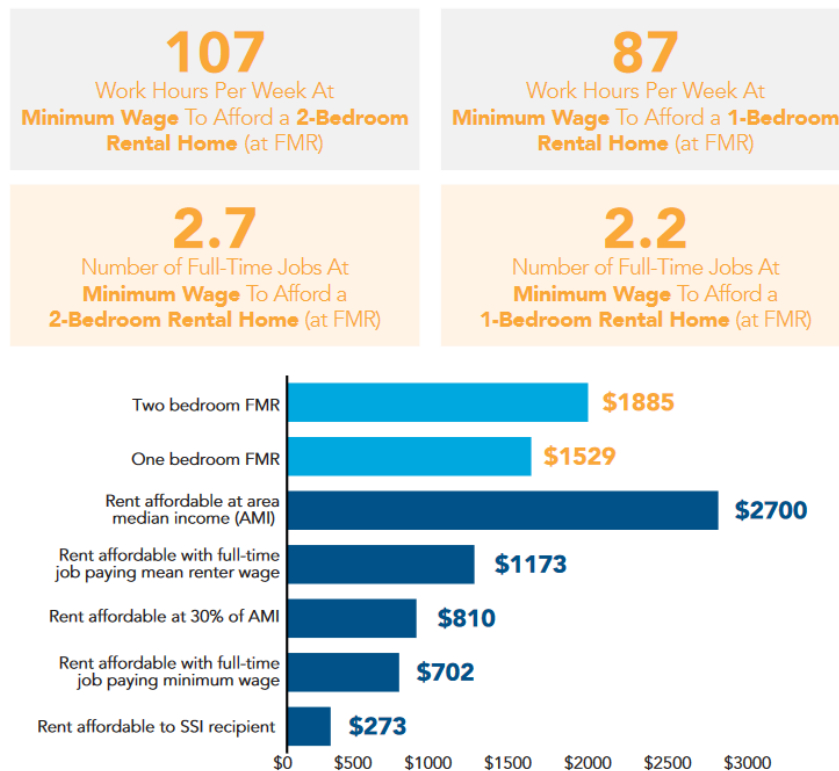
- 2. Single Payer.** Would you support legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts, which would guarantee health insurance as a right? (Y/N) Yes
- 3. Reproductive Justice—I.** Do you support requiring health insurance plans to cover all pregnancy care, including abortion care, prenatal care, childbirth, and postpartum care, without any kind of cost-sharing? (Y/N) Yes
- 4. Reproductive Justice—II.** Young people under sixteen seeking an abortion must obtain parental consent or judicial authorization. While most young people involve their parents, many cannot, causing delays to timely medical care and counseling. Scared teens may also turn to dangerous measures: going out of state or risking their lives and health with illegal or self-induced abortion. Would you support repealing this restriction on young people's access to abortion? Yes
- 5. 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
- 6. Community Immunity Act.** Would you support strengthening the Commonwealth's

immunization policies by standardizing the immunization requirements for all schools, daycare centers, and other covered programs and centralizing within the Department of Public Health (DPH) the processes for obtaining an exemption from those requirements? (Y/N) Yes

E. Housing

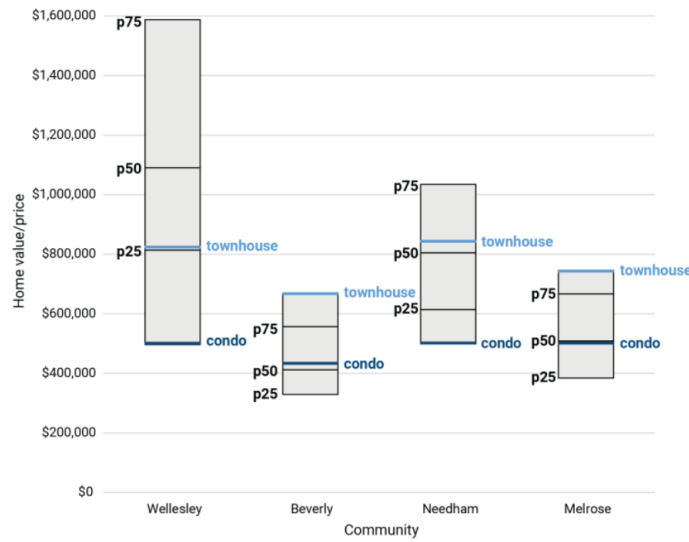
Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. The [US News & World Report's annual state rankings](#) put Massachusetts at #40 in housing affordability (and #47 in cost of living). A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [87 hours 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.

Small multifamily condos expand affordability in the wealthiest communities
 Comparing prices of new townhouses and condos to existing homes



Source: Existing home values taken from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2014-2018. Prices for new townhouses and condos from Crump, Mattos, Schuetz and Schuster (2020). Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

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 am a respected community leader in Roslindale and the city on housing. I have negotiated as a neighborhood advocate with developers on countless proposals to get needed housing built while ensuring more affordable units on site. After the Boston Zoning Board of Appeal rejected an affordable housing proposal in Roslindale in 2021 due to a lack of parking, I was a lead organizer in pushing Mayor Wu to appoint a new board. The mayor did ultimately appoint new board members with a more holistic approach to housing and development, and that new board recently approved a new iteration of that proposal to bring needed affordable housing to our neighborhood.

2. **Affordable Housing Funding—I.** Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a fee on real estate transfers to generate revenue for affordable housing, with the ability to create local exemptions as appropriate? (Y/N) Yes
3. **Affordable Housing Funding—II.** Would you support doubling the current Deeds Excise Tax (from \$4.56 per \$1,000 to \$9.12 per \$1,000), upon the sale of real property in Massachusetts, to create a new funding stream to be split evenly between affordable housing and climate resiliency? (Y/N) Yes
4. **Tenant Protections.** Would you support providing municipalities with the authority to implement rent control, 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

5. **Rent Control Home Rule Petition.** Would you support and advocate for Boston's pending home rule petition on rent stabilization and just cause eviction? Yes
6. **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase.** Would you support providing 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
7. **Right to Counsel.** Would you support legislation to provide legal representation for low-income tenants in eviction proceedings? (Y/N)

Yes. When I was in law school, I represented low-income tenants in housing court fighting unjust evictions and horrid living conditions.

8. **Zoning Reform.** Would you support comprehensive housing legislation to require multi-family zoning and remove costly parking mandates around public transportation and other suitable locations throughout the state, legalize accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as of right statewide, create a streamlined process for turning vacant land and commercial properties into multi-family housing, prioritize the disposition of state-owned land for affordable housing, and enable communities to adopt inclusionary zoning ordinances by simple majority vote?

Yes. I will also push for enforcement of the MBTA Communities Act and seek ways to strengthen that law to break down exclusionary zoning in many of our municipalities.

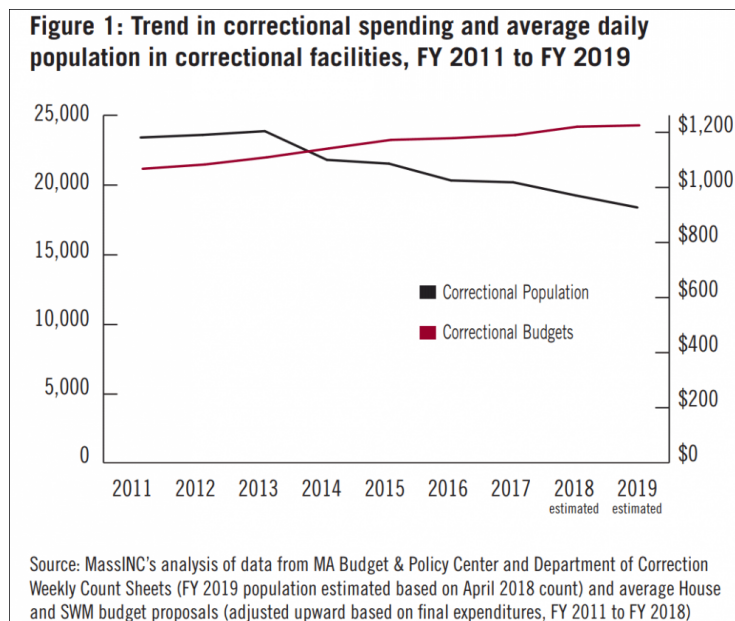
F. Racial and Social Justice

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.).

I believe it is incumbent on all of us, especially white Massachusetts residents like myself, to actively work to dismantle white supremacy in all systems in our state. As an attorney in private practice, I represented the mother of a Black man wrongly incarcerated at the Bridgewater State Hospital without due process. He never faced a trial and was incarcerated in the “hospital” where he could not receive proper treatment for his significant mental illness. I fought for over a year to get his mother guardianship rights so she could properly advocate for her son. After a long process, I successfully obtained guardianship for her and led to his release from the prison and placement in a civilian mental health treatment facility where he could finally receive proper care and family support. That entire experience opened my eyes and exposed me to the extreme injustice in our prison system and how individuals, especially Black and brown men, are just locked up and can become lost in the system that does not see them as people worth our care and concern.

2. **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
 - 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
3. **Alternative Crisis Response.** Do you support 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
4. **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

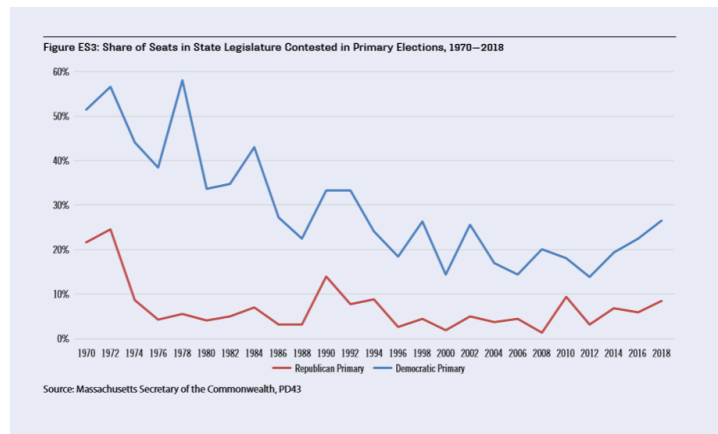
5. **Prison Accountability.** Massachusetts legislators have the statutory right to make unannounced visits to correctional facilities run by the state. Would you commit to exercising this right in order to improve accountability for the Department of Corrections? (Y/N) Yes
6. **Solitary Confinement.** Although the 2018 Criminal Justice Reform Act contained provisions to reduce the excessive and harmful use of solitary confinement, the Department of Corrections has established policies and practices to [evade implementation of the spirit of these reforms](#). Would you support legislation to address this discrepancy by establishing universal conditions of confinement standards applicable to all people in Massachusetts state prisons, county jails and houses of correction, regardless of housing or security status? Yes
7. **No Cost Calls.** 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. Do you support making phone calls free for incarcerated individuals? Yes
8. **Prison Moratorium.** Would you support a moratorium on the construction of new prisons and jails in the Commonwealth? (Y/N) Yes
9. **Expungement.** Would you support legislation to automatically expunge marijuana offenses with state-level coordination, firm deadlines, and a study on the impact of the expungements? (Y/N) Yes
10. **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

G. 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.



Lower-income, ethnically diverse municipalities have lower voter turnout than whiter, more affluent communities, leading to reduced voice in state politics.

Municipality	Turnout (Nov 2020)
Springfield	52.67%
Lawrence	52.72%
New Bedford	55.27%
Chelsea	56.94%
Holyoke	58.89%
Lowell	59.71%
Fall River	60.04%
Southbridge	60.44%
Brockton	63.86%
Lynn	64.07%

[Bottom 10 municipalities in terms of 2020 voter turnout](#)

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 firmly believe we need far more transparency in the Legislature. I am committed to publishing my own committee votes and will vote to make all committee votes public when the rules are determined at the beginning of each legislative session. The lack of sunshine and transparency as to the inner workings of the State House is a major impediment to progressive legislation and I pledge to do everything in my power to change that if elected.

2. Legislative Transparency—Part I. The Massachusetts Legislature lacks many basic transparency measures found in other state legislatures around the country. Would you vote in favor of making the following items available online...? (Y/N)

- a. All committee votes, whether taken by electronic poll or formal roll call? Yes
- b. All written testimony submitted for or against bills (with appropriate redactions)? Yes

3. Legislative Transparency—Part II. Legislators only vote to change the rules at the start of the legislative session, but all legislators can model transparency on their own throughout the session. Would you commit to making your committee votes available online on your website, with reader-friendly language about the bills voted on? Yes

4. Public Records Law. 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. Expanding Access to Public Meetings. During the pandemic, the ability to attend and participate in public meetings virtually has expanded the number of people who are able to participate, removing barriers faced by people with disabilities, people with small children, people with mobility issues, or people with scheduling conflicts (among many others). Would you support updating Open Meeting Law so that people can choose to participate remotely in public meetings on a permanent basis, even after the pandemic emergency ends, and providing the necessary funds to municipalities to implement this?

Yes. On a personal level, as a single parent to a young child, I have personally been able to attend many local community and public meetings remotely that I otherwise would not be able to attend in person.

6. Removing Barriers to Running. The cost of child care can prove prohibitive to parents seeking to run for office. Would you support legislation to explicitly allow parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for child care? (Y/N) Yes

7. Same Day Registration. 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

8. **Local Elections.** Municipalities across Massachusetts have sought to expand the franchise for local elections, but remain hamstrung by the home rule process.
 - a. Would you support legislation to enable municipalities to expand the franchise to 16- and 17-year-olds for local elections? Yes
 - b. Would you support legislation to enable municipalities to expand the franchise to legal non-citizens (e.g., Green Card holders) for local elections? Yes

9. **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

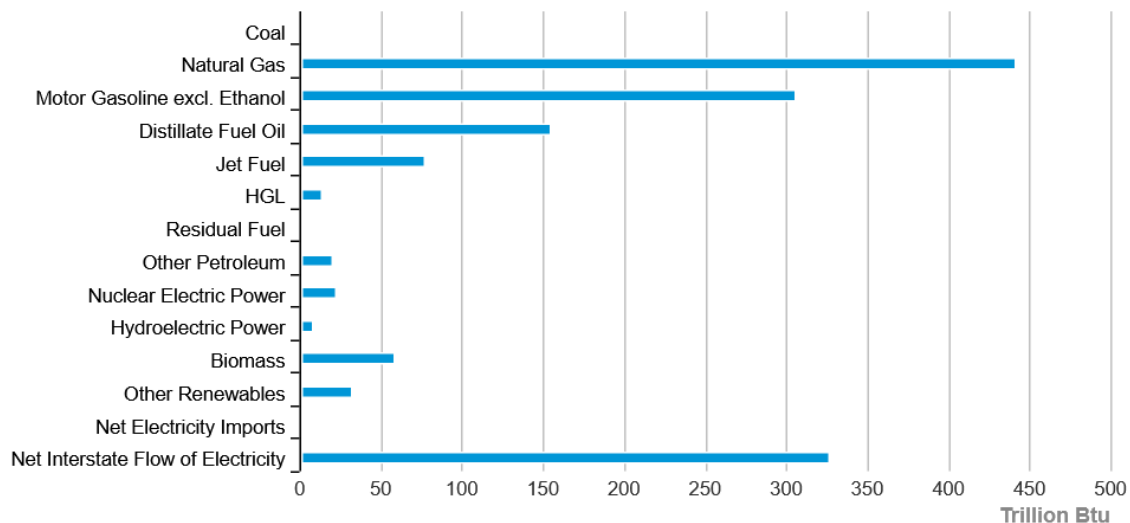
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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, as well as the goals of the 2021 Next Generation Roadmap law, 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 accelerating this transition and ensuring that equity is at the forefront.

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.

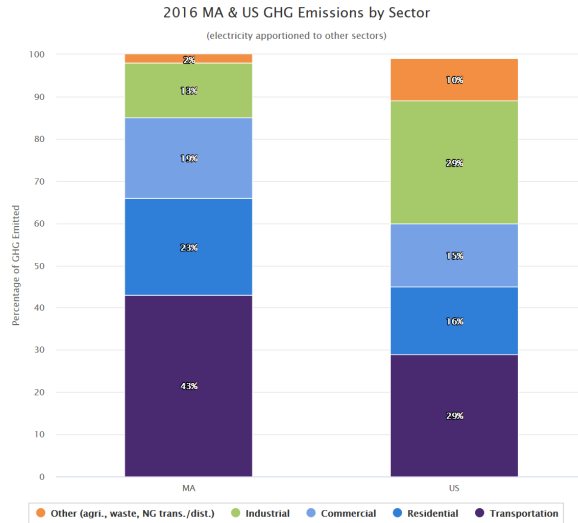
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.



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 am a respected community leader in Roslindale and Boston on public transportation. I was a lead organizer in establishing Boston’s first rapid bus lane in decades between Roslindale Square and Forest Hills. That lane provides a quick, efficient trip to the subway for thousands of bus riders every day, most of whom are of color. One of the primary reasons I am running for this seat is that our state government ultimately controls the MBTA. If elected, I will be laser-focused on the MBTA to hold its leadership accountable and to properly fund it as the public good it should be treated as.

2. **100% Renewable Energy.** Scientists have argued that, with existing technologies, the US could supply 100% of energy needs with renewable sources. Would you support requiring that Massachusetts adopt a target of sourcing electricity from 100% renewable energy sources by 2030? (Y/N) Yes

3. **Rooftop Solar.** Would you support requiring that all new construction be built to accommodate solar energy installations? (Y/N)

Yes. As a housing advocate, I push developers to install solar panels in new construction now.

4. **Fossil Fuel Infrastructure.** Do you oppose the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in the state? (Y/N) Yes

5. **Environmental Justice.** Would you support requiring the Energy Facilities Siting Board to consider environmental justice, public health, and climate impacts in decision-making on siting projects?(Y/N) Yes

6. **Electrifying Public Transit.** In Massachusetts, 43 percent of GHG emissions in 2016 came from transportation infrastructure and vehicles. Tackling this will require a shift away from cars and toward public transit, as well as electrification of both. Would you support the electrification of the MBTA bus fleet by 2030, RTA fleets by 2035, and the MBTA rail system by 2035? (Y/N)

Yes. The 10th Suffolk district is served by four commuter rail stations. It is imperative we electrify the commuter rail to provide more frequent service and eliminate the hazardous diesel pollution filtering through our neighborhoods.

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

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.

As a former board member of Roslindale Village Main Street (RVMS), I have worked on supporting our local small businesses owners and encouraging new businesses to open in our community. In the beginning days of the COVID-19 pandemic, I worked with others in RVMS to quickly and effectively provide financial grants to over two dozen business owners, a majority of whom were women and immigrants, to stay afloat financially until federal aid came in. I know that our small businesses are the lifeblood of our district's economy so I am committed to directing resources back into our community to aid them in rebounding from the effects of the pandemic. If elected, I will work with local officials to reduce red tape and streamline permitting processes to reduce costs to make it possible for our district small businesses to open and thrive.