



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2024 County Office
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Allison S. Cartwright Esq.

Office Sought: Clerk for the Supreme Judicial Court of Suffolk County

Party: Democratic

Website: www.cartwrightforclerk.org

Twitter: [@ElectCartwright](https://twitter.com/ElectCartwright)

Facebook: [Committee to Elect Allison S. Cartwright Esq](https://www.facebook.com/Committee to Elect Allison S. Cartwright Esq)

Instagram: [@CartwrightforClerk](https://www.instagram.com/CartwrightforClerk)

Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

About Your Candidacy

1. Why are you running for this office? What are your top three priorities if elected?

I am running for SJC Clerk to build on my thirty-years of experience in the legal profession. I have represented everyone from children to adults, immigrants, citizens, people in recovery – essentially everyone who has ever needed a second chance. If elected, I would work tirelessly to ensure:

1. That our state's highest court is run effectively and efficiently because someone with decades of courtroom and case experience should be the Clerk.
2. That the SJC is open and accessible. I would implement regular meetings of a commission of community members to ensure that I stay aware of ongoing issues with court access at the resident-level. These meetings would be multilingual. Additionally, I would make sure our websites are translated and have audible links in different languages.
3. I would work to ensure a more diverse range of voices are taken into account in decision making, but also that we see more diversity throughout our court system. I will be pushing for more outreach to law schools to create a diverse pipeline for law clerk positions.

2. What prepares you to serve in this office?

I have nearly 32 years of legal experience. I launched my legal career with the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS – the state's public defender agency), where I became a Roxbury Defender. I then served the City of Boston as Assistant Corporation Counsel, and following that, entered private practice. As a public defender and a private practice attorney, I represented clients in courts in Suffolk County, including District, Superior, Probate & Family, Juvenile. My practice also served clients in courts in Norfolk, Middlesex, Essex, Plymouth, Bristol, Dukes and Worcester counties. I have tried hundreds of cases before judges and juries. I returned to CPCS in 2019 to become the Attorney In Charge of the Roxbury Defenders, and was later promoted to Managing Director of the Public Defender Division's Central Region where I currently manage offices in Suffolk and Norfolk overseeing 70-80 staff at any given time.

I know the ins and outs of courtrooms and how the business of the court is

conducted ever since I was sworn into the Massachusetts Bar in 1992. Ensuring the working class and poor people have access to justice and be able to navigate the court system has been my life's work.

3. What do you think are the most significant challenges facing the office, and how do you intend to address those challenges?

Most people don't know about the office or know why it exists. The office is a bridge to the Supreme Judicial Court. Where you can't hold judges accountable you can hold the Clerk accountable. Transparency would be the best way to tackle both of these issues. I want to create a series of workshops on our court system and how to access it and learn from everyday people what barriers they face.

I also think language access is necessary. I would make sure our websites are translated and have audible links in different languages.

4. What progressive policies or programs will you implement if elected?

I will bring a public defender's perspective to the court. Immediately I would see accessing the court through a poor defendant's perspective. I would create a commission of community members that meet regularly and that speak to the judges about their experiences in the courts. These meetings will be multilingual. Although judges need to be neutral, they can still be accessible. It is critical for judges and court employees to see the communities they serve beyond the Courtroom.

I also will be pushing for more outreach to law schools to create a diverse pipeline for law clerk positions.

5. How do you see yourself as similar to or different from the current holder of the office you are running for?

We are both attorneys with decades of legal experience before we sought this office. We see the office as an extension of our professional legal training, not as a political Seat.

We both know how it is to make an argument at the SJC. We know what a difference a clerk can make.

6. Why should people care about this election and this office?

The Supreme Judicial Court is Massachusetts' highest court, it admits lawyers to the bar. It also implements discipline of lawyers. It is the bridge to the highest court.

7. If a voter asked you what this office does, how would you answer (in no more than 3 sentences)?

This office does

- 1) Admits attorneys to practice law and removes them if they violate legal and ethical standards of the profession.
- 2) Is the bridge to the Justices of the highest court.
- 3) Organizes appeals to the SJC single judge calendar (bail, agency, lower court decisions)

8. (As Relevant) What do you view as the role of county government in Massachusetts? To what extent would you like to see it expanded or limited?

To be honest, I would not be running for office but for this job. I think it's a bit outdated that we have to run for such a vital administrative role. I think the county government works well in rural and suburban areas. While Boston is a part of the county, it will be important to not forget Revere, Winthrop and Chelsea.