



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2024 Governor's Council
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Mara Dolan

Office Sought: Governor's Councillor - District 3

Party: Democrat

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

A. Questions about Your Candidacy & Platform

1. Why are you running for Governor's Council? What has drawn you to this office in particular?

As a public defender, my clients are among our most vulnerable and therefore the most impacted by the decision of the Governor's Council.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I have been a public defender for 17 years, working all across Massachusetts in our Juvenile, District, and Superior Courts. That has given me a great understanding of the issues playing out in courts, including the power given to judges and our Parole Board, as well as the importance of commutations and pardons. I have also been a legislative staffer, working for the Senate President as communications director, and worked as press secretary for the Secretary of State and worked on internal communications for the State Auditor. I have learned a great deal from those positions about how to get work done on Beacon Hill.

3. What factors do/will you consider when determining whether an individual should be confirmed as a judge, a member of the Parole Board, or a member of any of the other boards and positions considered by the Council? How much weight/importance do you give to each of the factors you consider? Do you have any litmus tests?

I have several litmus tests. All nominees must be pro-choice, anti-racist, and respect the science of brain development and the science of addiction. They must have a good temperament and a proven capacity to both work well with others as well as to lead. I want nominees to demonstrate that they understand how the world works for people who are less privileged than themselves.

4. What issues do you intend to prioritize during questioning in confirmation hearings?

Admission of potentially exculpatory evidence, of which the SJC recently held the D.A. of Hampton County had breached its duty to inform defendants. I want to make sure nominees understand the challenges of being low income, and that they will not unduly penalize anyone for not being able to meet financial obligations to the court. I am deeply concerned about how our courts treat people with a substance use disorder, seeing far too many taken into custody following relapse. I will make sure nominees understand the science of addiction and work to support recovery. Last, nominees must demonstrate a deep understanding of the systemic racism in our courts and an eagerness to use all the tools the law provides to end it.

5. **What role can the Governor’s Council play in helping to end mass incarceration in Massachusetts?**

Sentences are handed down by judges, so we need to make sure that all judicial nominees support ending mass incarceration and will sentence accordingly. Additionally, the Governor’s Council approves Parole Board members, and must make sure all nominees to the Parole Board support release on parole when appropriate.

6. **Governor Maura Healey released a [new set of guidelines](#) for the use of the Governor’s clemency power late last year. What are your thoughts on the new guidelines, and how do you approach the work of pardons and commutations?**

The new clemency guidelines are a great improvement, and something I pushed for during my 2022 campaign. As a public defender, I am well aware that not everyone is a good candidate for clemency. But I am also keenly aware that far too many are in custody who should not be. They do not pose a danger, they are able to build a healthy community upon their release, and they should be released.

7. **As a (current or future) member of the Governor’s Council, what do you perceive your role to be in considering a judicial nominee’s potential to reduce or eliminate rights of civil litigants?**

In a time when our federal courts are taking away our rights, it is critically important that the Governor’s Council ensures that all nominees will defend and protect civil rights. That’s another litmus test.

8. **The Massachusetts constitution clearly establishes a “right to a clean environment.” What does that right mean to you?**

That’s a great question. A clean environment is one which promotes health and does not harm it.

9. **To what extent do you intend to participate in the *recruitment of demographically and professionally diverse candidates to apply for positions on the various boards under the Governor’s Council’s purview?***

I will hold information sessions in the district for people interested in applying and will activate my networks to encourage demographically and professionally diverse candidates.

10. **Many people are unaware of the existence of the Governor’s Council. How will you seek to increase transparency and civic engagement if elected?**

My campaign has primarily been about educating voters about the critical work of the Governor's Council. In my experience, once people understand what they do, they care tremendously and want to know more. I will use my political communications skills, combined with the platform of a Governor's Councillor, to keep the issues at the front and make sure we never go back to the days of people dismissing the Governor's Councillor and assuming no one cares. That simply isn't true.

11. **(If a challenger or a candidate for an open seat) How would you describe yourself as similar to or different from the current officeholder?**

There are enormous differences between myself and the incumbent. I am pro-choice, pro-science, anti-racist, and have a great deal of experience working in our courts. I support raising the age of Juvenile Court jurisdiction. I believe that the duty of a candidate for public office is to inform voters accurately about their positions and record.

B. Yes/No Questions

1. **Reproductive Justice - I.** 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? (Y/N) **YES.**
2. **Reproductive Justice -- II.** With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, states are more important than ever as bulwarks of reproductive rights. Would you commit to voting against any judicial nominees with anti-abortion records? (Y/N) **YES.**
3. **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. Enacting the recommendations from the special legislative commission on facial recognition, to implement privacy, civil rights, and due process protections to govern police use of the technology? (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**. But I clicked on the link for details and it didn't work. So that's a qualified yes, based on the details. Certainly there are cases where prosecution for statutory rape is not appropriate, but as it is often difficult to prove lack of consent there may also be cases where a statutory rape charge could be useful when a victim is unable to prove lack of consent any other way. Again, I have not seen the details and would like to.
 - 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. **Clean Slate.** The Massachusetts court system maintains a database of name-based court arraignment records, referred to as Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI). Many people are trapped in poverty and shut out of jobs and housing because of the difficult process to expunge their records, even for cases that did not end in a conviction or occurred when they were teenagers. Would you support...
- a. Requiring the Commissioner of Probation to automatically seal criminal and juvenile records after the applicable waiting periods without requiring individuals to file a petition to do so? (Y/N) **YES**.
 - b. Requiring the immediate sealing of a criminal offense if the charge did not end in a conviction? (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](#), by essentially turning Souza-Baranowski into de facto solitary confinement by limiting out of cell time to three hours per day, which exceeds the definition established in the 2018 Act by one hour. 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? (Y/N) **YES**.
7. **Prison Moratorium.** Would you support a moratorium on the construction of new prisons and jails in the Commonwealth? (Y/N) **YES**.
8. **Prison Accountability.** Governor's Councilors 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**. YES YES

C. Please fill out the following three questions if you have professional experience as an attorney

- 1. As a practicing attorney, have you moved to exclude evidence in a trial? If so, please give an example of what types of evidence you have moved to exclude in a civil trial.**

I have only done a little bit of civil work and have had no civil trials.

- 2. In civil practice, what percentage of your litigation involves plaintiffs, and what percent involves defendants? n/a**

- 3. Have you ever filed a motion to reduce a verdict, or to set aside a verdict as excessive? Please explain.**

No, but I have appealed a decision to hold someone without bail and was successful.