



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2022 Legislative
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Tommy Vitolo

Office Sought: State Representative

District: 15th Norfolk

Party: Democratic Party

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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.

*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. 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 for re-election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for many of the same reasons that compelled me to run for the first time in 2018. I am running to improve equity in all aspects of our civil life, to improve the quality of education so that our children have skills to succeed, and to heal our environment because the cost of inaction is too great.

In all of these areas, I'm proud of what we accomplished in these last few years. I was proud to play a role in helping pass the ROE Act, enshrining a woman's right to choose in our laws and creating greater access to reproductive health services for women and girls in Massachusetts. I was proud to be part of the team in the House that passed the Student Opportunity Act, helping to put more money back in our public schools, and I was proud to help lead efforts to pass aggressive emission reduction goals as part of the Roadmap 2050 which creates new pathways for our state to achieve an 85% reduction in emissions by 2050.

When serving in a body of 160 members – all of whom get an equal vote in all matters – it's impossible to get everything right one hundred percent of the time. I measure my success on whether we were able to make someone's life better or not – and I believe so far I've succeeded. Many of my amendments have become law – and that is a result of my ability to work with my colleagues to build consensus and move things forward for our constituents.

We have so much more work to do and I am proud that the voters of Brookline have asked me to help represent their interest on Beacon Hill twice – and I'm asking them to let me be their voice again.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I'm a candidate for re-election to the State Representative for Brookline for another term. The voters of Brookline have trusted me to represent their interests at the State House twice because they know that I am a progressive consensus builder who is focused on outcomes that make their lives better. They trust me to work with leadership and colleagues from across the state to pass bills that help the most people possible.

I've been an active, elected official in Brookline for over 15 years, developing relationships and learning about the issues most important to my district. I spent 10 years working as an energy consultant on behalf of environmental and consumer advocates, leading teams that ultimately led to the forced retirement of approximately 1 percent of the coal-fired power plants in the entire country. My work also included fighting proposed gas pipelines

and ensuring that solar PV installations were paid their full value, resulting in dramatically more solar PV than would have been installed otherwise.

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?

As only 1/160th of the legislature, the biggest obstacle in passing progressive policy is that not everyone shares our values. In order to pass meaningful legislation, I need groups like Progressive Massachusetts to be part of the strategy in passing these bills, to work hand in hand with progressive partners in the legislature (like me) to build and sustain grassroots support for our shared legislative priorities.

4. What is one policy pioneered by another state that you would like to see Massachusetts adopt?

A great many states in the Southeast and Midwest provide substantially more funding for state colleges and universities, resulting in dramatically lower prices for students. Graduates (and those who don't finish) leave the school with dramatically less debt, allowing far greater freedom to (a) continue to live in and contribute to their home state, and (b) to pursue the career they believe to be the most fulfilling rather than chase student loan payments in jobs that neither contribute to a better society or a better life for the graduate.

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

As an individual, I've never built a broad coalition. I've worked with teams to build broad coalitions though. For example, I worked with colleagues and advocates to build the will to pass ROE, and I worked with colleagues and advocates to bring together some pro-worker portions of the House Roadmap climate bill – as well as the specialized stretch energy code.

6. (For incumbents only) Each year, Progressive Massachusetts compiles a scorecard of key roll call votes, available at <https://scorecard.progressivemass.com>. Please use this space to explain any discrepancies between your votes and the progressive position.

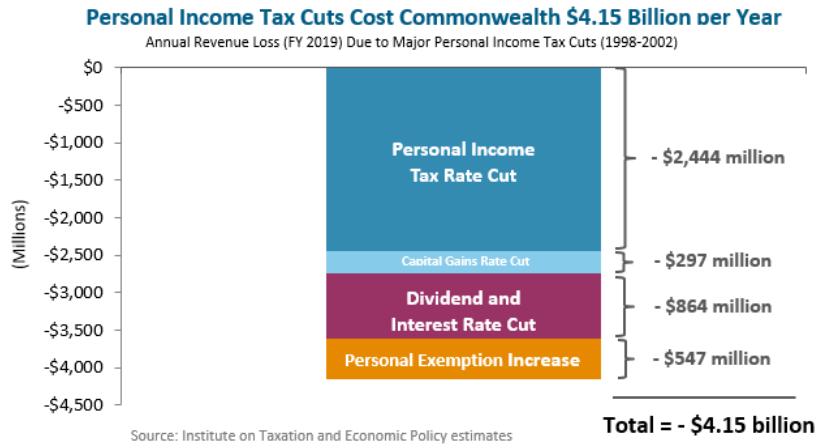
This year I'm tied for 15th most progressive. Last session my score was similar. Many deductions in the scorecard relate to the rules votes, and I don't believe that the rules votes amendments are progressive votes. My interest is in providing tools for the Democratic majority in the legislature to move forward, and I don't believe that the proposed amendments to rules included in the scorecard achieve that.

II. The Issues

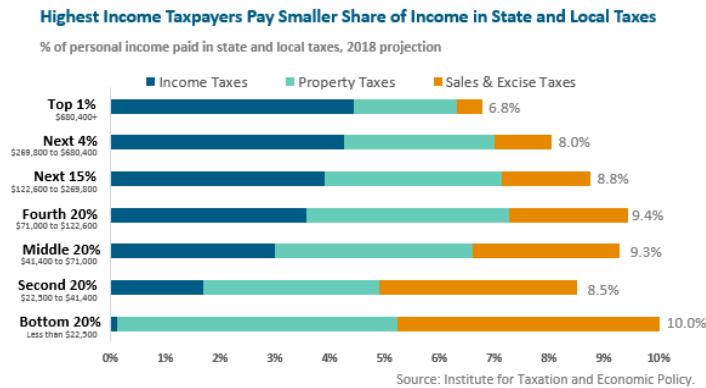
A. Revenue and Taxation

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.).**

I support the fair share amendment and I have voted to pass that constitutional amendment during both constitutional conventions (as well as gather signatures when the intention was a direct ballot initiative).

I have a modest tax proposal to expand transit deductions to MBTA riders who don't use weekly/monthly passes, RTA riders who get no deduction, and bike share riders and other bicycle commuters.

- 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. **Collecting and publicly disclosing information about the benefits to the state from any tax break?**

YES.

- b. **Repealing any tax break that does not provide the intended benefits in a cost-effective manner?**

YES.

- c. **Establishing sunset dates for all tax breaks so that they must come up for periodic review?**

YES.

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

YES. My support goes all the way back to collecting signatures with Raise Up to get Fair Share on the ballot.

- 4. Progressive Revenue.** The Fair Share Amendment ballot initiative will raise much-needed revenue for our commonwealth, but we will require more resources to meet current needs. 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.)**

YES.

- b. **Imposing a tax on the portion of corporations' US profits that are shifted to offshore tax havens?**

YES.

- c. **Raising the corporate tax rate from 8% to 9.5% (where it stood in 2009)?**

YES.

- d. **Raising the tax on long-term capital gains from 5% to 8.95%, in line with states like New York and Vermont?**

YES.

- e. **Levying a modest tax on university endowments greater than \$1 billion?**

YES. I support taxing endowments on spending actions that aren't aligned with direct primary research or funding tuition and fees, such as taxing high administrative salaries or extravagant real estate or other capital expenditures.

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.

- a. **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?**

YES.

- b. **Would you support requiring the Department of Revenue to regularly collect the data on the financial impact of lost tax revenue from tax-exempt institutions?**

YES.

The real estate portfolio of the non-profit institution is not a good metric for the costs imposed on municipalities or their ability to pay without reducing important charitable services. However, I support taxing non-profits on actions that aren't aligned with direct charitable efforts, such as taxing high executive salaries or extravagant real estate or other capital expenditures.

6. **Public Bank.** Do you support the creation of a Massachusetts [public bank](#) that would make loans to small businesses, local farmers, cooperatives, community development financial institutions, community development corporations, and municipalities?

YES.

7. **Divestment.** Do you support divesting public investments from private prisons, fossil fuel companies, and weapons manufacturers?

YES. I joined Rep Connolly in pushing back on anti-divestment testimony while

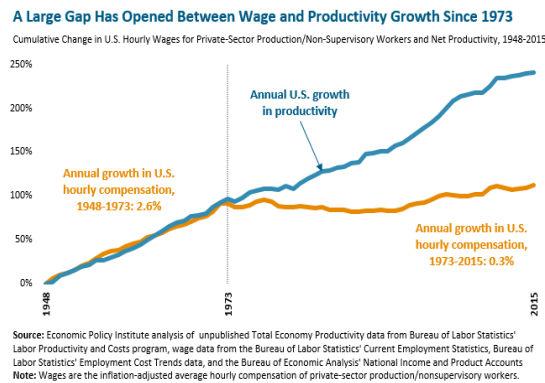
serving on the Joint Committee on Public Service. See:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8pRJOZLNnQ>

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.

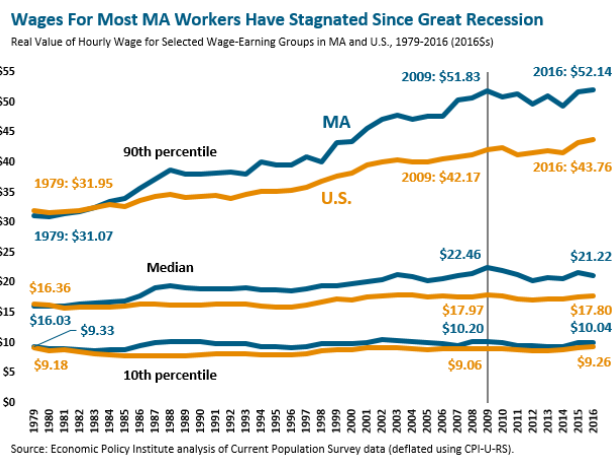
In recent decades, unions have been under attack. However, unions played—and continue to play—a pivotal role in creating a strong middle class. With weaker unions (or no unions at all) come weaker social and economic rights and an imbalanced economy.

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 support the Raise Up campaign and have previously worked to gather signatures to put the \$15 minimum wage and paid sick time on the ballot. In the legislature, I've supported the right to organize and stood with our brothers and sisters in Labor on picket lines. I voted for the economic development bond bill which brought hundreds of thousands of dollars to communities for vocational training, and I support a fair wage for a hard day's work. In the legislature.

2. One Fair Wage. Do you support eliminating the subminimum wage for tipped workers?

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?

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?

YES.

5. Fair Scheduling. Many workers in the service sector face irregular working hours, making it difficult to plan for other life events. Do you support providing workers the right to 14 days advance notice of hours and the right to request specific hours without retaliation from the employer?

YES.

6. 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?

YES.

7. Paid Vacation Time. The US is the only advanced industrial country to not guarantee workers paid vacation time to use as they wish. Would you support making Massachusetts the first state to require employers to provide paid vacation time to their workers?

YES.

8. 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?

YES.

9. **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?**

YES.

- b. **Will you oppose all legislation that weakens Massachusetts’s labor law protecting employees from being misclassified as “independent contractors”?**

YES.

10. **Worker Ownership.** Do you support allocating state funding (grants, loan guarantees, technical assistance funds) to support worker-owned and governed businesses and cooperatives in Massachusetts?

YES.

11. **Worker Governance.** Would you support incentives and/or requirements for large MA corporations to allow workers to elect at least some members of the board?

YES.

12. **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?**

YES. I support the right of any group of workers to organize as fundamental to our democracy.

- 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?**

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?**

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.

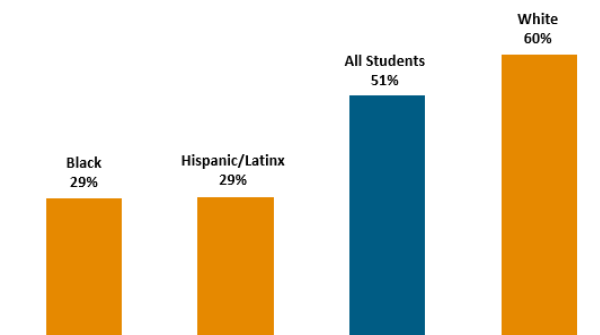
Public education has also been under attack by powerful corporate interests seeking to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups invest millions of dollars to promote the expansion of privately run charter schools, which siphon money from our public K-12 districts while largely excluding 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

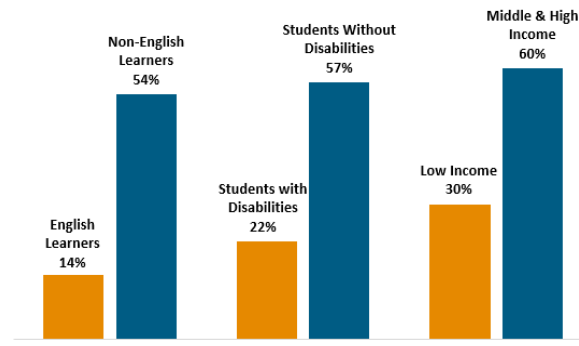
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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



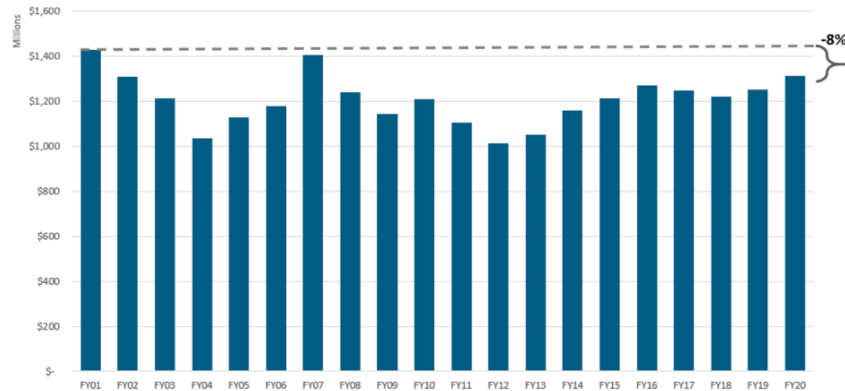
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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.

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 worked alongside former Representative Aaron Vega to pass the Student Opportunity Act. This law updated the school funding formula and brought more money into schools and classrooms, helping address issues of equity in education. This bill isn't perfect – nothing the legislature does on its first try is, but is a major improvement over the 1993 Education Reform Act. Before being in the legislature, I was a staunch advocate for Brookline's public schools – serving as field director for 2015's "Yes for Brookline," pro-override campaign for classroom expansion, and as an advisor to similar efforts in 2018 and 2019. When the Brookline School Committee failed to negotiate a 3-year contract with the Brookline Education Association, I stood with the teachers. As the father of two school aged children, it's important to me that they receive a world-class education. Knowing that COVID has reshaped the educational landscape and interrupted nearly three years of classroom instruction, we need to continue to be responsive to the needs of educators and students alike, making sure that we are doing everything we can to put as many students as possible back on the pathway to success.

2. **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?

YES.

3. **Standardized Testing.** Massachusetts is now one of just 10 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?

YES.

4. **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?**

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?**

YES. I have filed a bill to bring greater transparency to charter schools by creating requirements parallel to those in public schools for open meetings, notification to parents and the community, etc.

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?

YES.

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?

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?

YES.

8. **Higher Education Access.** Do you support granting in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students?

YES.

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

YES. Both my wife and I attended North Carolina State University, where in-state tuition is dramatically lower. We've seen first hand how low-cost higher education opens opportunities for incoming students and for new graduates; tuition-free would further those positive outcomes.

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.

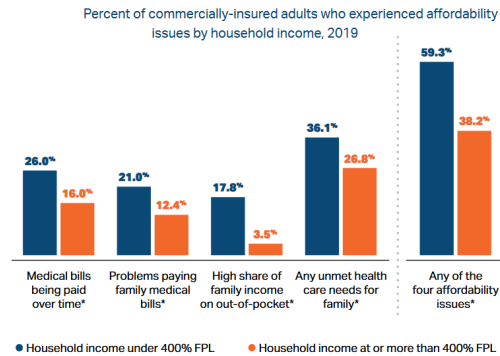
<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/average-new-car-prices-up-nearly-4-percent-year-over-year-for-may-2019-according-to-kelly-blue-book-300860710.html>

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 care deeply about making health care affordable and accessible to everyone in the Commonwealth. I have always believed everyone needs access to health care which is why I have supported initiatives that make access to healthcare more affordable. Further, as women across our country find themselves under assault by right-wing ideologues seeking to roll back rights and access to reproductive healthcare, I was part of the effort to enshrine Roe in our laws. The ROE act, among other bills, ensures that women and girls have a right to safe, affordable and legal abortions in Massachusetts.

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?

YES. I'm a member of the Medicare for All caucus.

3. **Whole-Person Health**. Would you support legislation adding oral health and dental services as a requirement of state standards for MassHealth and commercial Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and other value-based care models?

YES.

4. **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?

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?

YES.

6. **Reproductive Justice—III**. 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.

7. **Menstrual Equity**. Would you support providing access to free menstrual products in schools, shelters, and prisons?

YES. I also believe they should be included in health inspections – requiring free menstrual products in any place with public accommodations, including government buildings, restaurants, retail establishments, etc.

I voted to require Brookline public buildings offer free menstrual products in all restrooms.

8. **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?

YES.

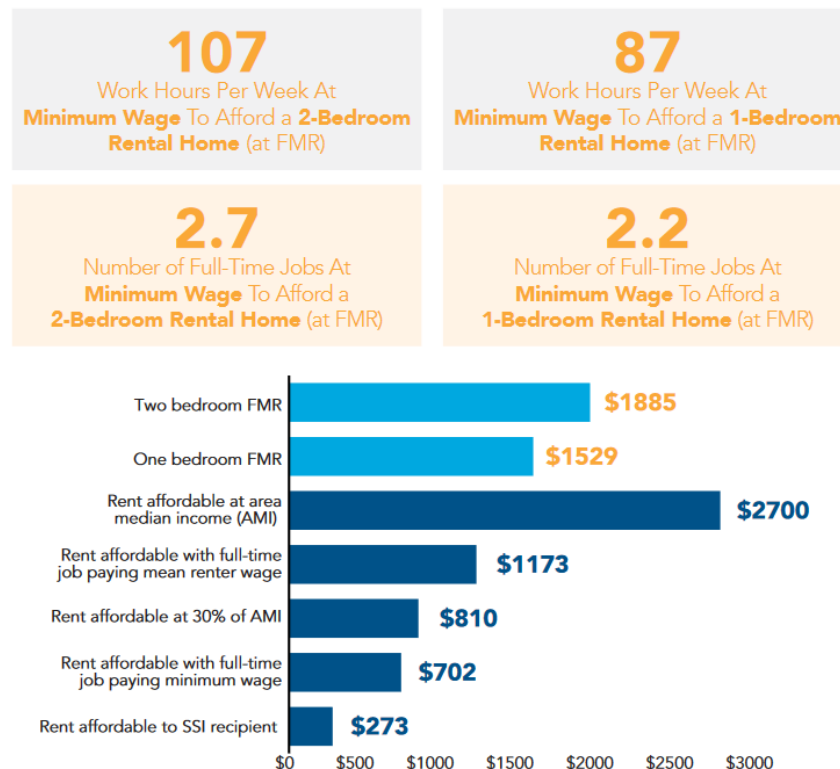
9. **Community Immunity Act**. Would you support strengthening the Commonwealth's immunization policies by standardizing the immunization requirements for all schools, daycare centers, and other covered programs and centralizing within the Department of Public Health (DPH) the processes for obtaining an exemption from those requirements?

YES.

E. Housing

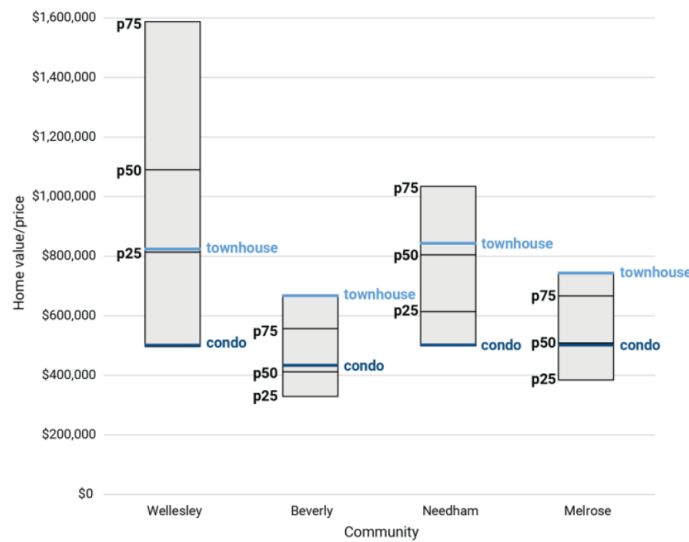
Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. The [US News & World Report's annual state rankings](#) put Massachusetts at #40 in housing affordability (and #47 in cost of living). A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [87 hours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

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 lack of housing inventory – especially affordable housing – remains one the largest challenges facing Massachusetts. Our Commonwealth is inherently unequal and we must do more to ensure that anyone interested in building their life in Massachusetts can do so. Our instrument for expanding affordable housing, Chapter 40B, continues to plug away at filling this gap – and I continue to support efforts for the state to help cities and towns develop and implement housing production plans so that new affordable housing is built to meet the needs of residents and communities. I proudly voted in favor of the “Housing Choice” provisions of last session’s Economic Development bill, ultimately requiring considerable number of units “by-right” in MBTA communities near transit stations. I support the establishment of further tenant protections like rent control – but I also believe that these should be means tested so that the people who need these types of programs are the ones who actually receive them.

I am committed to increasing homeless housing options as part of our work to expand housing more generally. We know that when we stabilize a person's housing, they are able to focus on finding work and work their way towards financial safety. This goes part and parcel with our challenge of creating new housing. A housing first policy is essential – linking the availability of housing with sobriety, job-seeking, or any other criterion ignores the substantial correlations of experiencing homelessness and relapse, and is simply inhumane.

2. **Homeless Bill of Rights**. Would you support the creation of a Homeless Bill of Rights

that extends anti-discrimination protections to persons experiencing homelessness, including protections when seeking employment, housing, voter registration, and access to public spaces and places of public accommodation; and secures the right of persons experiencing homelessness to rest, seek shelter from the elements, occupy a legally parked car, pray, eat, and avoid needless harassment in public spaces?

YES.

3. **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?

YES. In addition to supporting the state-wide bill, I've filed Brookline's home rule petition on RETF.

4. **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?

YES.

5. **Social Housing.** Would you support the creation of a state social housing authority to produce and preserve mixed-income homes that are union-built, sustainable, collectively owned, affordable for all income levels, and financially self-sustaining?

YES.

6. **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?

YES.

7. **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?

YES.

8. **Right to Counsel.** Would you support legislation to provide legal representation for low-income tenants in eviction proceedings?

YES.

9. **Eviction Sealing.** Eviction records create lasting stigma, are prone to error and impair access to stable housing. Would you support legislation to seal eviction records so that both tenants and landlords can move on with their lives?

YES.

10. **Zoning Reform—Part I.** Throughout Massachusetts, restrictive and exclusionary zoning laws make communities unaffordable and exacerbate residential segregation. Would you support the following steps....?

a. Prohibiting municipal and state zoning bylaws, ordinances, and land use decisions that discriminate based on race, socioeconomic status, or familial status?

YES.

b. Enabling municipalities to pass inclusionary zoning ordinances by a simple majority vote?

YES.

c. Enabling municipalities to pass zoning ordinances to eliminate parking requirements for multifamily residential development by a simple majority vote?

YES. I have been active in the successful efforts to reduce the minimum parking requirements in Brookline's zoning code, and have voted in favor of every proposal to reduce local parking minimums.

11. **Zoning Reform—Part II.** The Department of Housing & Community Development recently released guidelines for the 175 MBTA communities to have a zoning ordinance or bylaw that provides for at least one district of reasonable size near public transit in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right. Would you support extending this requirement to include *all* municipalities that have public transit available, as opposed to only MBTA communities?

YES. I worry that one possible response is that some communities may eliminate mass transit within their town rather than allow/expand multi-family housing.

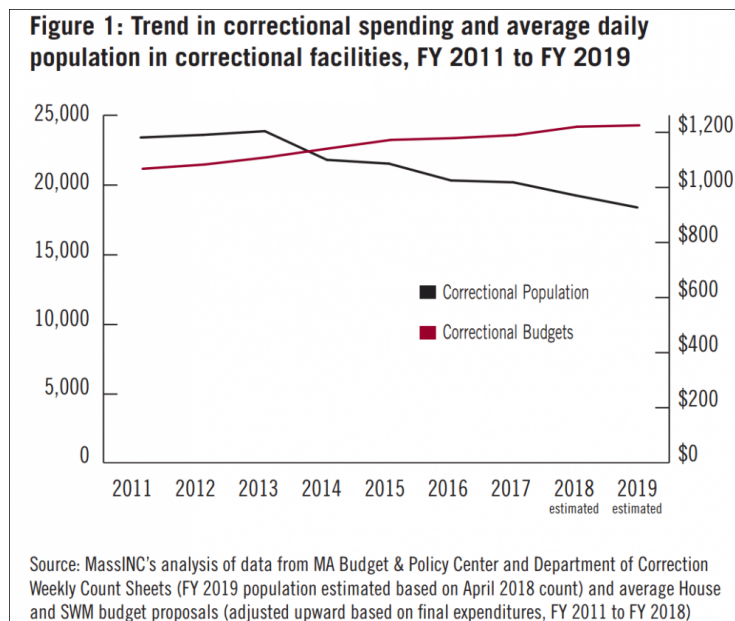
F. Racial and Social Justice

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 voted for An Act Relative to Justice, Equity and Accountability in Law Enforcement in the Commonwealth which made a number of reforms to municipal and state policing, increasing transparency – some of the most comprehensive reforms in the country. I stood with the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus in voting for every single amendment the caucus supported, and expressed that support publicly leading up to the vote. Last session’s police reform law was a necessary but certainly not final step. We need to do more to eliminate qualified immunity for officers, regulate the use of privacy-invading technology like facial recognition software, and create greater local oversight of how police equipment is used. We also need to do more to address the growing mental health crisis in our country, ensuring that individuals receive the support they need before more tragic events occur. Finally, we need to focus on ensuring that the people who enter our corrections system receive the help and support they need so that they can reenter as productive members of society – that means revisiting our laws to determine whether there are unintended consequences or harm being done.

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?**

YES. QI prevents courts from ruling on not-yet-ruled-upon constitutional questions, guaranteeing the ability of law enforcement to continue with identical violations repeatedly. We must allow, indeed require the courts to make decisions on apparently novel constitutional rights questions, so that QI is only used extremely rarely, and not as a shield for abusive behavior.

- 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?**

YES.

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

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?

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?**

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?**

YES.

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

YES.

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

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?

YES. I have visited Souza-Baranowski maximum security as a Rep, and believe visiting unannounced would be illuminating.

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 taking [measures](#) such as (but not limited to) providing all incarcerated people with access to at least 1 hour of structured programming each day for 5 days a week, and offering a minimum of 50 minutes of therapy per week to everyone in segregated confinement by qualified clinical mental health providers; and requiring that all people held in solitary confinement be given a minimum of 4 hours out of cell time?

YES.

7. **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 support legislation to end these restrictions?

YES.

8. **Prison Profiteering—Part I.** While Massachusetts does not have private prisons, the DOC invites private companies to profit off the families of incarcerated individuals by price gouging, as incarcerated individuals have no alternatives but to buy from the sole providers of goods in prisons. Would you support ending such price gouging by the DOC for necessary items and requiring DOC to adequately supply incarcerated individuals with the basic requirements necessary for life and maintain good health and hygiene?

YES.

9. **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. Do you support making phone calls free for incarcerated individuals?

YES.

10. **Prison Moratorium**. Would you support a moratorium on the construction of new prisons and jails in the Commonwealth?

YES.

11. **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?

YES.

12. **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?

YES.

13. **Work and Family Mobility Act**. Do you support removing immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit?

YES.

14. **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?

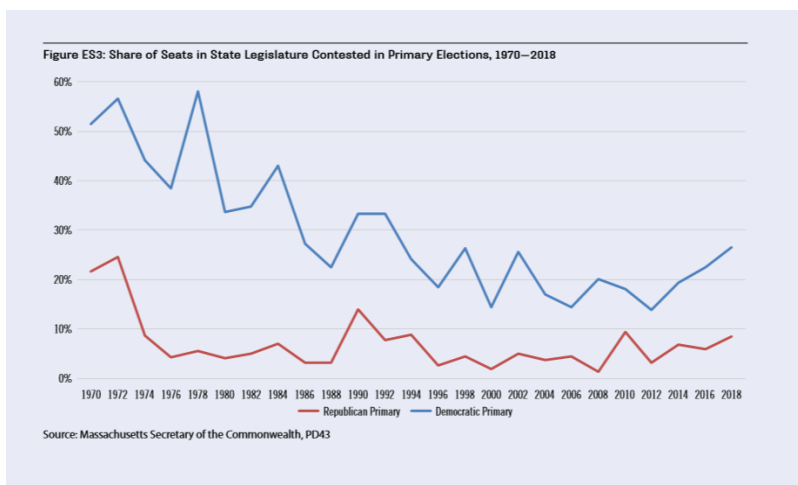
YES.

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.

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Turnout (Nov 2020)</u>
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 believe that we can establish greater trust with our constituents by making the legislature and the governor subject to freedom of information requests – although we must also ensure that proper resources go into creating greater transparency as well, like creating new FOIA clerk positions and other necessary positions. The pandemic taught us that remote participation in public meetings was an added life blood for participation in democratic institutions and I support allowing municipalities the choice of continuing to use remote participation.

I also believe we'll see higher turnout – and more competitive elections – with expanded and improved voting laws. I support same day registration and election day registration, and voted to support EDR on the House floor. The vote failed, but pressure remains, and even if EDR isn't included in the conference bill, the final bill will make voting more accessible, and I believe that will lead to increased turnout and more competitive elections.

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...?

- 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.

- c. **Reader-friendly summaries of bills currently in or reported out of committee?**

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 doing the following...?

- a. **Standing for a recorded vote when a colleague asks for one on any amendment which you have co-sponsored?**

YES.

- b. **Making your committee votes available online on your website?**

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?

YES. There may be situations where records should be exempt from public records laws -- but the burden should be on determining which documents ought be exempt, with a default of public availability.

- 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).

- a. **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. I have filed a bill to allow Brookline's Representative Town Meeting to meet in a hybrid fashion going forward, rather than entirely in-person.

- b. **Would you advocate for continuing the practice of allowing people to testify virtually at legislative hearings?**

YES.

- 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?

YES. This is lived experience for me -- I have two young children, a spouse who travels extensively for work, and no extended family within driving distance.

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?

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.

I support (8a) and (8b), and have voted in support of each. I don't believe that home rule is the most productive path to these good election reforms. Instead, a single state-wide municipal-opt-in would allow for more efficient lawmaking, consistent regulations, and would allow for the Secretary of State to maintain the voting database for minors or for non-citizens, rather than requiring that each municipality bear that responsibility individually.

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)?

YES.

10. **Redistricting.** Would you support legislation to codify the goal of creating [influence districts, crossover districts, and coalition districts](#) in order to expand opportunities for representation and voice for communities of color?

YES.

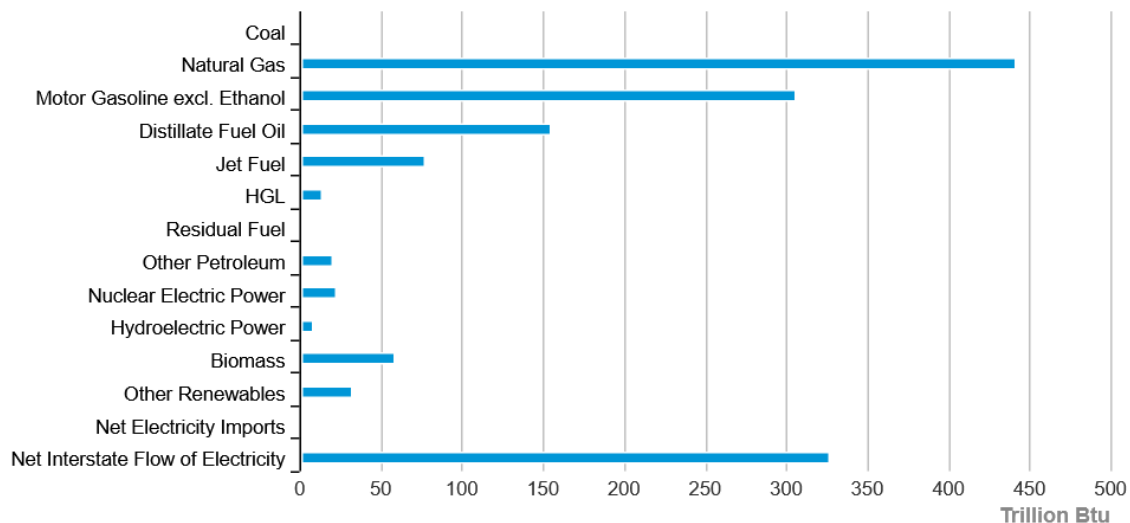
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

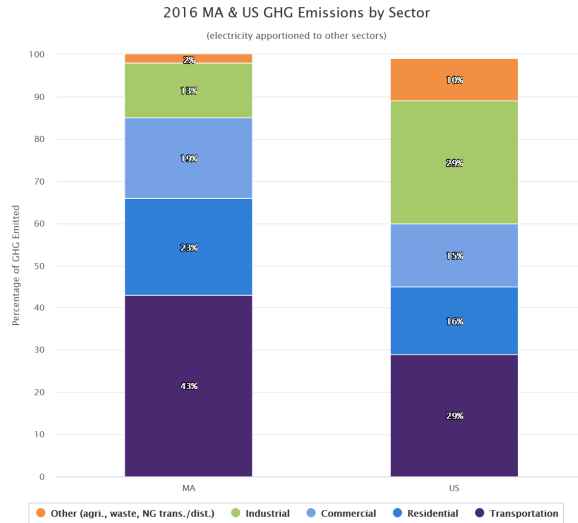
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.).

After earning a PhD in Systems Engineering, I worked for 10 years as an expert witness on electricity and natural gas issues across the country, on behalf of environmental advocacy organizations and consumer advocacy organizations. I performed analysis for and testified before public utility commissions across the country in hearings related to integrated resource planning, value of solar, avoided cost, and other matters. In aggregate, my work on resource planning resulted in the forced retirement of about 1% of all coal-fired power plant capacity in the United States. North Carolina is ranked 3 in solar power; a significant portion of that resulted from my successful intervention in a Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke Energy Progress, and Dominion Power PURPA docket in 2017.

My professional energy resume can be found here:
<https://www.synapse-energy.com/sites/default/files/resume-vitolo.pdf>

As a Brookline Town Meeting Member, I authorized and shepherded the local legislation to create Brookline's community choice aggregation program, and at the time had the most aggressive RPS Class I default requirement. The program continues to improve, and before the end of 2022 will have 100% renewables as the default. Prior to that, I authorized the town's Solar PV Ready requirement.

I provided considerable technical and political support for the Brookline Town Meeting members who created and passed Brookline's fossil-fuel-free requirements for new construction and substantial renovations.

2. Next Generation Roadmap. At the start of this legislative session, the Legislature

passed a bill that requires emissions reductions of 50% from 1990 levels by 2030, 75% by 2040, and at least 85% by 2050. How can the Commonwealth exceed these targets, and what will your priorities be in advocating for that?

In addition to several pro-labor amendments included in the House bill, my amendment creating a Specialized Stretch Energy Code was eventually included in the conferenced bill. While DOER and BBRS haven't yet promulgated building code that I believe meet the moment, that we will allow for communities that want to move beyond the Stretch Code to do so is an improvement that we can build upon.

I share my expertise on power generation with colleagues working on power plant requirements. I'm active in the MBTA and RTA caucuses, and continue to push for more legislative support for transit, cycling, and pedestrian improvements through policy and budget.

My legislative focus, though, has been on reducing emissions from buildings. The state has dozens of emitting power plants, and very few of the millions of autos on the road today will be on the road in 2035. But the buildings we have now number 2 million, and almost all of them will still exist in 2050, continuously or nearly continuously occupied in the interim. Retrofitting them will be an incredible challenge, which is why my focus is there.

3. **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?

YES. This is quite tricky, because we simply don't have enough projects in the interconnection queue to reach that goal, and if implemented incorrectly, ratepayers would suffer tremendously while owners of already-existing power plants would make substantial windfalls. Furthermore, if in response to the market pressure, the other New England states reduce their requirements, we could be asking Massachusetts ratepayers to pay substantially more for electric bills without reducing emissions. We must get building space and water systems converted from gas (and oil) to electric – and driving up the price of electricity only makes that conversion more difficult to execute.

I believe we can and must aggressively increase the sourcing of renewables for our electric grid, well in excess of the laws on the books today. As a bona fide expert in electric resource planning, I cannot say that 100% by 2030 (rather than, say, 90% by 2030 or 100% by 2032) is the best policy.

4. **Rooftop Solar.** Would you support requiring that all new construction be built to accommodate solar energy installations?

YES. To the extent solar the insolation is adequate.

5. **Fossil-Fuel-Free Construction.** Would you support legislation to enable municipalities to ban oil and gas heating pipes in new construction?

YES. I helped draft Brookline's language, the first to pass in Massachusetts!

6. **Fossil Fuel Infrastructure.** Do you oppose the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in the state?

YES.

7. **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?

YES.

8. **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?

YES. I was able to include several amendments in the House Roadmap bill to strengthen the just transition provisions.

9. **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?

YES.

10. **Free Public Transit.** Do you support making public transit in the Commonwealth fare-free?

YES. Buses immediately, because free buses provide the greatest performance improvement to the riders most in need. I've written extensively about that here: <https://twitter.com/TommyVitolo/status/1468221776815661060>

I'm not sure that making all mass transit passes tests on progressiveness. To be specific, would transit riders across the system be better off if the MBTA didn't collect fare from Brookline's wealthier Green Line riders, or if it collected that fare and used it to accelerate improvements in areas with a higher fraction of low-income riders?

11. **Regional Transportation Funding.** The unavailability of state funds for infrastructure spending has meant the deterioration of regional transportation systems. Do you support allowing municipalities to place a question on the ballot to raise revenue for local and regional transportation projects?

YES.

III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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.