



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2021 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: 10/11/2021

Candidate: Lydia Edwards

Office Sought: State Senate, First Suffolk & Middlesex District

Party: Democrat

Website: <https://www.lydiaedwards.org/>

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

Questionnaire Responses (excepting sections labeled CONFIDENTIAL) will be published on our website.

RESPONSES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES WILL BE PUBLISHED ON THE
PROGRESSIVE MASS WEBSITE AND AVAILABLE TO VOTERS

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, which progressive voters find extremely valuable when making a decision.

Our Questionnaires 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. The bulk of the questionnaire consists of “yes/no” questions. Please consider “support” to mean an intent to co-sponsor relevant legislation, join sign-on letters for it, submit testimony on its behalf, etc., as appropriate.

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 beyond this in the additional comments space provided on the form, 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 Policy Approach

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

I am running for state Senate because I know Massachusetts needs bold action to address the growing divides in our society. Today we are facing devastating challenges: from housing insecurity to climate change to workers' rights. We must organize and change our political system to truly deliver progressive change. That means bringing people together to deliver innovative and game-changing policy solutions that lift up frontline workers, environmental justice communities, the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, and people of color.

As an advocate and City Councilor, there are many issues I have worked on that require action at the state level. I've written legislation and, as a Councilor, have worked with my state delegation to file policies, not all of which are ultimately passed at the State House. I want to take the advocacy to the next level to ensure that I can do more good for more people.

If elected, I will prioritize housing, worker rights, and environmental justice (given the district, particularly focused on air pollution and the transportation crisis).

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

Information about my record is available on my [website](#), and I've copied some of that below:

Councilor Lydia Edwards is a career advocate, activist, and voice on behalf of society's most vulnerable. She was raised all over the world by her military mom but chose to make East Boston her home.

Prior to being elected to the Boston City Council, Lydia worked extensively in the legal field. She worked as a public interest attorney with Greater Boston Legal Services focusing on labor issues such as fighting for access to unemployment insurance, back wages, fair treatment for domestic workers, and combating human trafficking. Additionally, she coordinated a statewide campaign to pass the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights - and she won. Following the bill's passage, she was named Bostonian of the Year, Honorable Mention, by the Boston Globe.

As a City Councilor, she has led efforts to protect Boston's affordable housing stock through innovative and bold policy proposals. She has spearheaded reforms to Inclusionary Development and Linkage and passed through the council a real estate transfer fee on the sale of properties valued over \$2 million, with all proceeds dedicated to affordable housing.

Lydia has pushed to reduce airport pollution, expand water transportation, address traffic congestion, ensure community voice in major energy projects, rebuild public housing and stop proposed highway expansion. She has solidified her role in the community as a bridge-builder, convening and organizing community meetings to take on larger conversations like Suffolk Downs in East Boston, the Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project in Charlestown, and climate resilience in the historic North End.

She has spearheaded the effort to get the city's charter amended and democratize the \$3 billion city budget through participatory budgeting. Lydia has advocated for greater transparency in city government while maintaining fiscal responsibility. She has fought to reform the Zoning Board of Appeals to reduce influence-peddling in the development process. Lydia is fighting for a Boston that works for everyone.

3. What do you view as the main job(s) of a state legislator?

State legislators are policymakers: policy is made through legislation, through advocacy for implementation and regulation, and through the budget. Legislators also are a bridge to government services for their constituents and a check/watchdog on the executive branch, as well as private industry.

4. What do you view as the biggest obstacles to passing progressive policy at the state level?

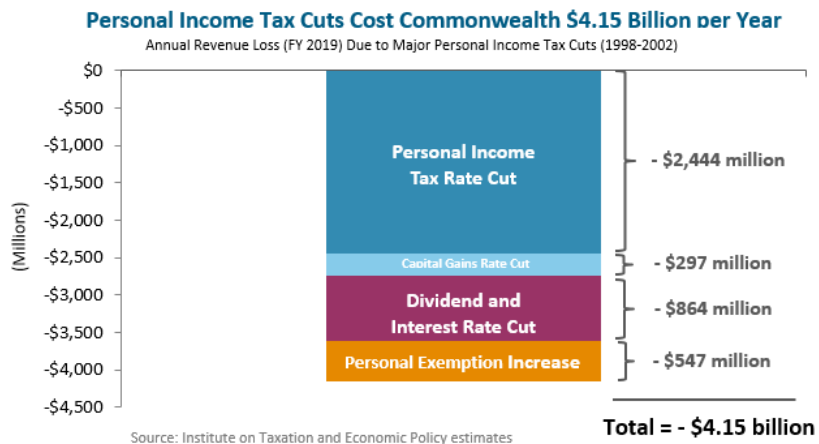
We need organizers and committed advocates who understand the grassroots nature of campaigns, the bold speaking of truth to power, as well as the careful dance of negotiation-diplomacy-sealing the deal to help generate (or, in reality, channel organizers' power in concert with those movements) and create opportunities "inside the building" to make new and better laws.

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 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.

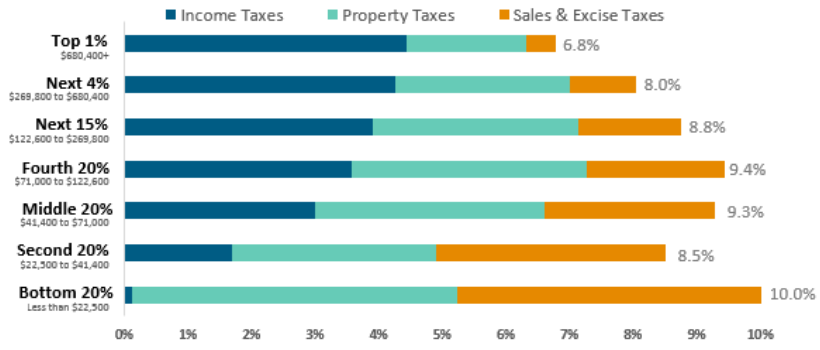
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.



Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.

Highest Income Taxpayers Pay Smaller Share of Income in State and Local Taxes

% of personal income paid in state and local taxes, 2018 projection



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

Our society is dangerously unequal today, and the few exploit the many for personal gain. Massachusetts is a wealthy state, but the tax system is regressive and we restrict local communities from raising the revenue they need to fund equitable and adequate services and infrastructure. I've strongly supported the work of Raise Up Massachusetts to pass the Fair Share Amendment, raise wages and provide labor protections. I've also fought against real estate speculation to impose taxes on speculative purchases, and to advance transparency behind who is buying and selling homes in our communities.

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.** Would you support a constitutional amendment to increase the income tax on income over \$1 million by 4% (Fair Share Amendment, sometimes referred to as the "Millionaire's Tax")?

YES

4. **Progressive Revenue.** Massachusetts will not see new revenue from the Fair Share Amendment until 2023, but we have unmet needs now (and will still even with the Fair Share Amendment). Which policies would you support 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

B. Jobs and the Economy

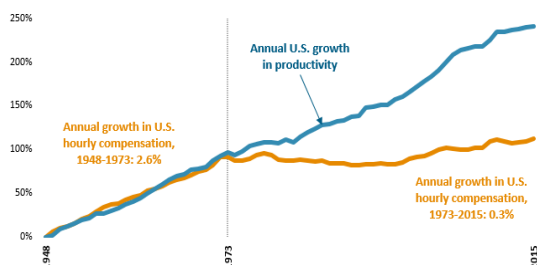
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which 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.

A Large Gap Has Opened Between Wage and Productivity Growth Since 1973

Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015

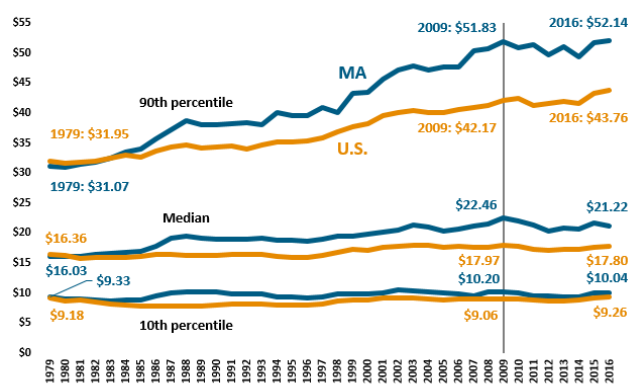


Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Trends data, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis' National Income and Product Accounts
Note: Wages are the inflation-adjusted average hourly compensation of private-sector production/nonsupervisory workers.

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

Wages For Most MA Workers Have Stagnated Since Great Recession

Real Value of Hourly Wage for Selected Wage-Earning Groups in MA and U.S., 1979-2016 (2016\$)



Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey data (deflated using CPI-U-RS).

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

In 2014, I led the successful efforts to win statewide labor protections for domestic workers, nannies and house cleaners cut out of the New Deal. I have fought to eliminate sub-minimum tipped wages for restaurant workers - a legacy of slavery - and to provide financial resources to restaurants who change their business model to a single, equal wage. This advocacy resulted in the creation of a Restaurant Revitalization Fund to improve conditions for both restaurants and workers.

At Suffolk Downs, I stood by labor to win a Project Labor Agreement at the largest private development project in Boston's history, creating good union jobs for a whole generation of workers. Learning from barriers to employment faced by immigrant workers at the Everett casino, and drawing from a model for language access created by SEIU 32BJ, I fought for commitments to language justice and won an unprecedented investment in ESL for job training.

I have stood with workers in the hospitality industry, service workers at Logan Airport, student workers in our higher education system, teachers, Brazilian immigrant workers and many others.

2. **Fair Wages.** Do you support eliminating the subminimum wage for tipped workers in support of one fair wage?

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. **Overtime.** Would you support updating MA's state overtime law to restore overtime pay protections to low- and moderate-income salaried workers when they work more than 40 hours a week?

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. **Unions.** Since the 2010 election, a number of states have rolled back the collective bargaining rights of public workers as part of a well-funded, nationwide assault on unions, led by wealthy, conservative donors. Would you oppose any effort to roll back the collective bargaining rights of state or municipal employees?

Yes.

7. **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.

C. Education

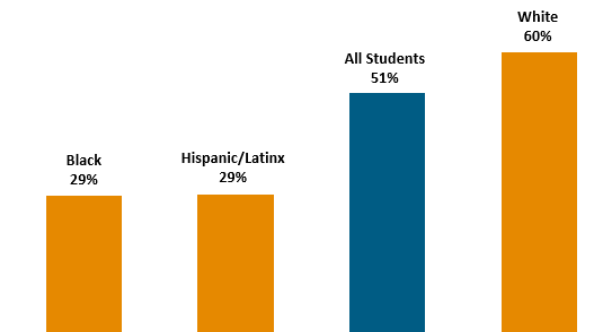
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country.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

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

Massachusetts has significant achievement gaps reflective of resource gaps.

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

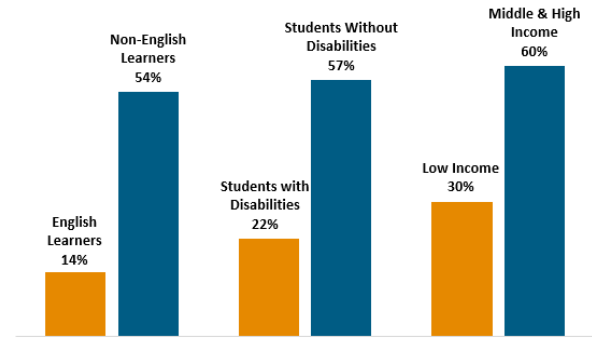
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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

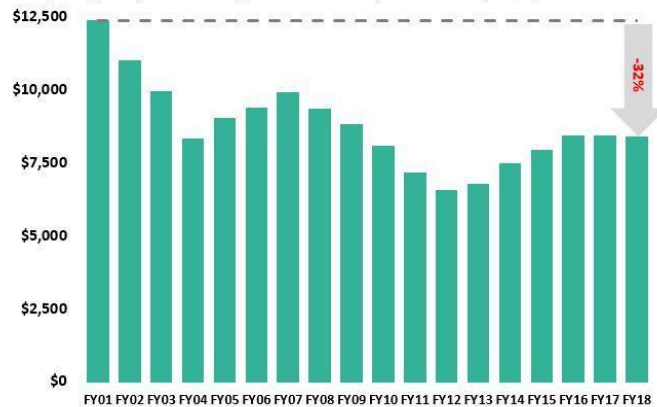


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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

Per Student, MA Has Cut Higher Ed Funding by 32 Percent Since FY 2001

State spending on higher education per resident student, FY 2001-2018 (2018\$)



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 as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).

Education is the cornerstone of our society, and our Commonwealth has a rich history in founding public education. The intersection of housing segregation through zoning and planning and the property tax-based mechanism for funding local services has created incredible disparities and we must use all tools to reverse historic harms and level the playing field.

As a councilor, I've voted down bad school budgets when the per-pupil formula catastrophically worsened the impacts of residential displacement by sucking school funding away from East Boston schools. Advocacy for PILOT reform has also sought to generate revenue for critical areas like education and housing. I've supported an overhaul to surveillance that will protect BPS students from ICE and excessive policing. I've advocated to electrify school buses and expand modular classroom spaces during a time of inadequate facilities in Boston.

2. **Universal Pre-K.** Do you support creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?

Yes.

3. **Equitable Funding.** In 2019, Massachusetts updated its 25-year-old education funding formula and committed to \$1.5 billion more in investment in public schools. However, the legislation to do so – the Student Opportunity Act – did not include funding for this promise, and the state is already behind on its commitment. *What steps would you take to make sure that the state keeps its promise to teachers, students, and parents?*

I will file budget amendments or cosponsor them, support new revenue sources, work with advocates on community mobilizations, and take other steps as needed.

4. **Standardized Testing.** Do you support a three-year moratorium on the high-stakes uses of standardized testing? (High-stakes" uses include high school graduation, teacher evaluation, and assigning ratings to schools.)

Yes.

5. **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 as public school districts?

Yes.

6. **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 the effective use of contraception?

Yes.

7. **Anti-Racist Education.** Do you support the creation of a Commission for Anti-Racism and Equity in Education, which would ensure that ethnic studies, racial justice, decolonizing history, and unlearning racism are taught at all grade levels using a critical approach and pedagogy that is age-appropriate?

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

D. Health Care

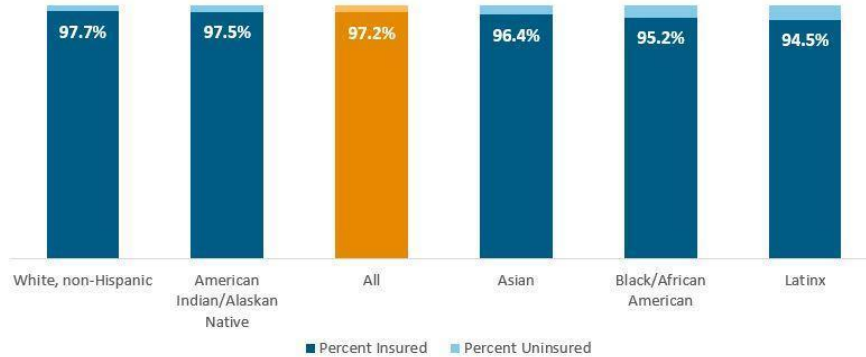
Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with [97% of the state](#) having health insurance. But until that is 100%, we haven't reached truly universal coverage or tackled critical barriers to accessing care. Disparities in insurance coverage and health care 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.

We have yet to achieve truly universal coverage, with continued disparities along racial lines.

Barriers to health insurance coverage remain for some

Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.

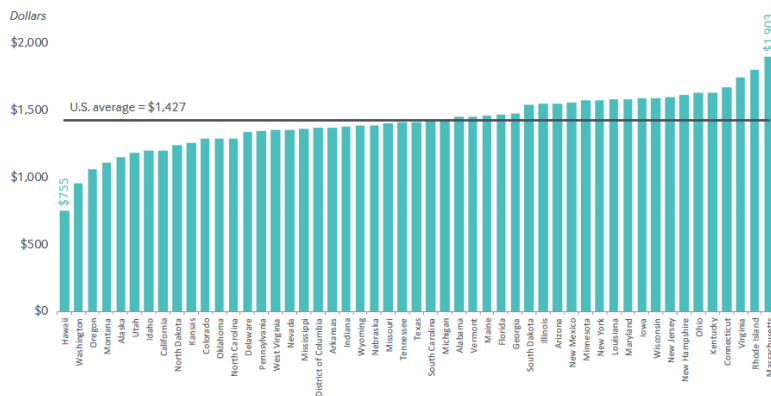


Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

*Note: Use particular caution when considering the American Indian/Alaskan Native data, because of small sample sizes. This chart does not include Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander because the sample was too small and therefore was not included in the Census Bureau's data.

MA has the highest health insurance premiums in the US.

Average Annual Employee Premium Contribution for Single Coverage, by State, 2018



Note: Employee premium contributions are for insurance policies offered by private-sector employers in the U.S.
Data: Medical Expenditure Panel Survey—Insurance Component (MEPS—IC), 2018.

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

I live in a community with high rates of asthma and COPD due to environmental pollution. Many residents access healthcare either through their local community health center or, unfortunately, through the emergency care system. The high cost of medicine and insurance creates aversion to preventative care and burdens residents with debt. Unfortunately, efforts to cut costs often fall on the back of nurses and healthcare workers who already shoulder incredible burdens.

We must advance a healthcare system that understands a healthy community benefits our society and economy. To do so, we need policies that raise revenues, guarantee rights, and limit costs and private profits.

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

YES

3. **Reproductive Rights.** In Massachusetts, women under sixteen seeking an abortion must obtain parental consent or judicial authorization. This can lead to young women going out of state, or risking their lives and health with illegal or self-induced abortion. Would you support repealing this restriction?

YES

4. **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

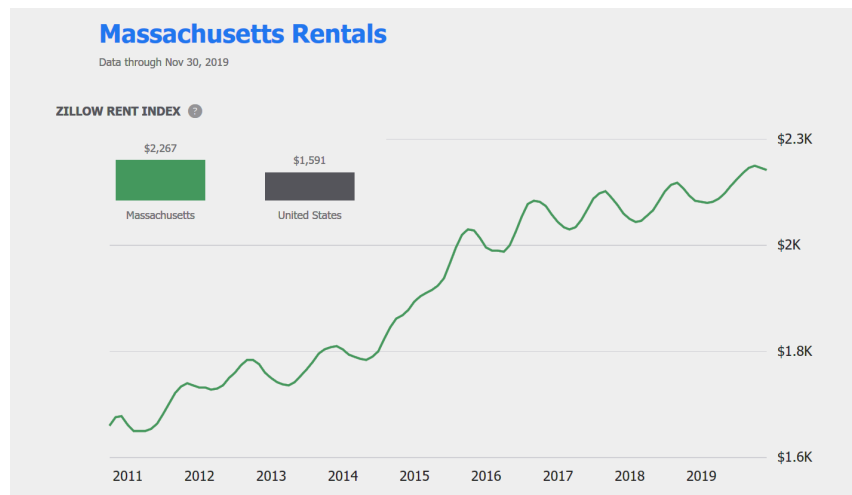
5. **Pandemic Response.** How would you evaluate the state's response to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Massachusetts' response has only succeeded with immense advocacy from those communities disproportionately impacted by the health, housing, and economic crises. While our vaccination rate as a state is relatively strong today, the state repeatedly prioritized private interest over public goods, outsourced public health services to private companies and consultancies, acted glacially on everything from housing stability to more everyday policies like remote work, notarization and outdoor dining at restaurants.

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 #41 in housing affordability (and #43 in cost of living). A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [91 hours a week](#) to afford a modest one-bedroom rental home at market rate (and 113 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.

Monthly median rents have gone up by more than one-third since 2010, outpacing income growth.



(source: [zillow.com](https://www.zillow.com))

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

Please see [Issues | Lydia for Senate \(lydiaedwards.org\)](https://www.lydiaedwards.org) for my housing background, also copied below:

Lydia Edwards is a champion for housing justice, having served as a legal aid attorney, the founding Deputy Director of the Office of Housing Stability, and a staunch advocate for affordable housing on the Boston City Council.

Lydia delivered results on the Boston City Council to stabilize housing for older homeowners, passing legislation to help seniors pay back property taxes. She wrote the law enabling real inclusionary zoning in Boston and won increases in affordable housing fees on large-scale commercial development.

Lydia has gained national attention for her successful advocacy. After Lydia [authored a change to Boston's zoning code](#) to advance [fair housing and civil rights](#), the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development described the policy as "[groundbreaking](#)." When Lydia raised concerns about speculative real estate sales, the City of Boston petitioned the US Treasury to [scrutinize all-cash sales](#) and prevent illegal market activity.

But she has always focused on the housing crisis in the communities she serves. When Boston's North End was devastated by investor-owned short term rental properties, Lydia teamed up with her colleague Michelle Wu to regulate services like AirBNB and end the worst abuses of our housing stock. In Boston's Chinatown, Lydia negotiated the sale of historic row houses to a community land trust, preserving them as affordable in perpetuity.

When real estate developers told her 20% affordable housing on the Boston side of Suffolk Downs was impossible, Lydia worked with community leaders to, against all odds, [secure unprecedented victories](#), despite a flawed process that privileged private interests before the public good. The East Boston Housing Stabilization Trust and rental relief funds continue to support East Boston families.

Lydia spearheaded reforms to the Boston Zoning Board of Appeal, resulting in an Executive Order by then-Mayor Marty Walsh and a home rule petition pending at the state legislature. She continues to work to improve transparency and accountability in city planning.

Lydia has already worked with officials across the First Suffolk and Middlesex District to fight for state reforms to housing policies. Over recent months, Lydia has advised on and advocated for new housing policy in Cambridge. Her advocacy has called for a new comprehensive housing policy focused on addressing the housing needs of Black, brown, and low- and middle-income residents and families, ultimately hoping to codify that housing is a human right. Additionally, she partnered with Senator Boncore to introduce the [HOMES Act](#), legislation to seal eviction records and give struggling tenants a second chance. In the legislature, she'll be an unparalleled fighting for housing justice.

2. **Affordable Housing Funding – I.** Would you support legislation that would 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, I sponsored a home rule petition

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?

YES

4. **Tenant Protections.** Would you support passing enabling legislation to provide municipalities with the authority to implement rent-stabilizing regulations, just cause eviction protections, stronger condominium conversion and foreclosure protections, anti-displacement zones, and options to help tenants manage the upfront costs of leasing an apartment?

YES

5. **Eviction Prevention.** Tens of thousands of families across Massachusetts are now facing eviction following the expiration of our state's eviction moratorium. Would you support a moratorium on all evictions due to COVID-19-related nonpayment?

YES

6. **Eviction Sealing.** Today, when a tenant exercises their legal rights in housing court, it creates a permanent record. Eviction records create lasting stigma, are error prone and impair access to

stable housing. Would you support legislation to seal eviction records so that both tenant and landlord could move on with their lives after three years?

YES, I wrote this legislation

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.

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 inmate 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. The April 2018 criminal justice reform bill made strides forward, but there is more work to do.

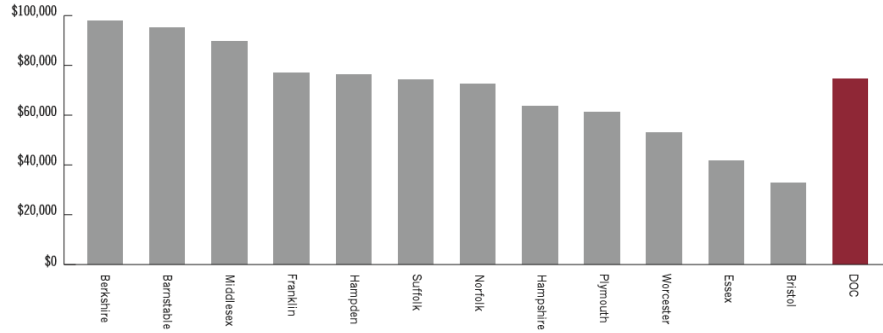
Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts's population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. As the Trump administration in Washington ramps up a xenophobic mass deportation agenda, it is important for states like Massachusetts to take leadership in protecting and advancing the rights of our immigrant communities and making clear that all are welcome.

Significant racial disparities exist in incarceration in Massachusetts.

Imprisonment by Race/Ethnicity (2014)	
White imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	81
Black imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	605
Hispanic imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	351
Racial/Ethnic Disparity in Imprisonment (2014)	
Black : white ratio	7.5
Hispanic : white ratio	4.3
Juveniles in Custody (2015)	
Juvenile custody rate (per 100,000)	66
White custody rate (per 100,000)	22
Black custody rate (per 100,000)	222
Latino custody rate (per 100,000)	172
American Indian custody rate (per 100,000)	0
Asian custody rate (per 100,000)	7

Massachusetts spends large (and growing) sums per inmate – while still not providing for basic needs.

Figure 4: Estimated expenditure per inmate, FY 2019



Source: MassINC's analysis of Department of Correction Weekly Count Sheets, April 2018, and average House and SWM FY 2019 budget proposals (adjusted upward based on final expenditures, FY 2011 to FY 2018)

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

I support shifting focus from incarceration and policing to mental health, substance abuse recovery counseling and treatment, housing security and supportive services. As a councilor, I supported updates to the Boston Trust Act, a ban on facial recognition, protection against surveillance technologies, and a charter amendment to enable democratic budgeting. I also called for an alternative to 911 mental health response with several colleagues. I oppose increasing state investment in carceral facilities and support a moratorium on prison construction.

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
 - b. Banning facial surveillance technology, which is well-documented to be both inaccurate and racist?
YES
 - c. Requiring a vote by a local legislative body (city council, town meeting) before a municipality can acquire military equipment?
YES
3. **Alternative Crisis Response.** Do you support creating a grant program through the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to increase the availability of non-law-enforcement, unarmed community-based response options for calls to 911?
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. Which of the following reforms would you support?
 - a. Eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid-related 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?
I do not support a unilateral decision to eliminate life without parole without consideration for the circumstances of the case. I do agree with the assertion that it is costly and inequitable.
5. **Solitary Confinement.** In Massachusetts, prisoners can be sentenced to 10 years of solitary confinement—per infraction. The UN defines holding someone in solitary confinement for more than 15 days as torture. Do you support limiting the use of solitary to no more than 15 consecutive days?
YES
6. **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.](#)) Do you favor ending these restrictions?
YES
7. **Prison Profiteering.** While Massachusetts does not have private prisons, the DOC invites private companies to profit off of the families of prisoners by price gouging inmates who have no

alternatives but to buy from the sole providers of goods in prisons. Do support ending the price gouging of inmates for necessary items and requiring DOC to adequately supply inmates with the basic requirements necessary for life to keep in contact with their families and maintain good health and hygiene?

YES

8. **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

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

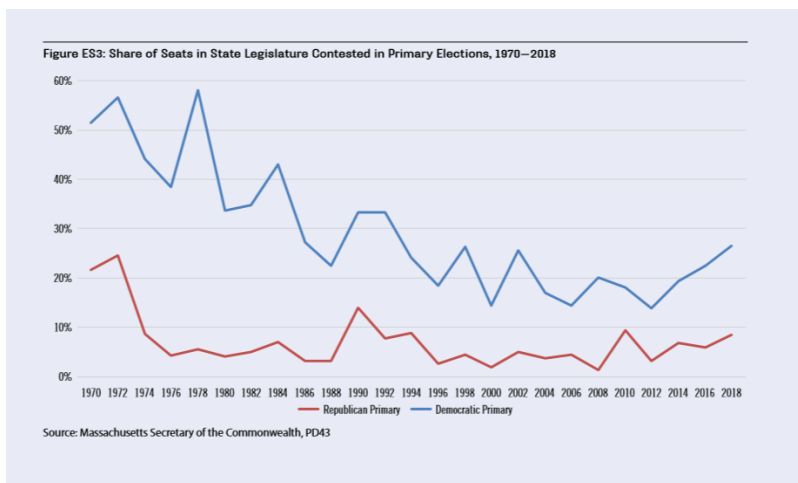
YES

G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

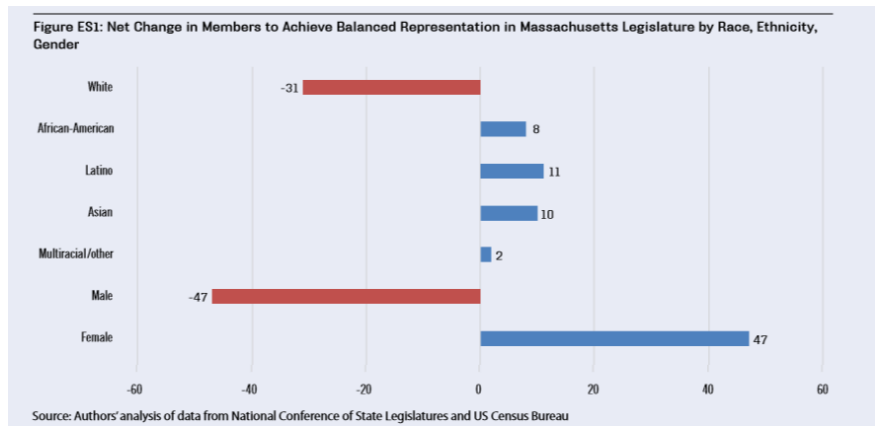
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine 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 brought much-needed reforms, we still lag behind states in New England and around the country in making voting accessible (Maine, for instance, has allowed for Election Day Registration since the 1970s).

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

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



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



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

I support transparency and open government. I worked to amend the city council rules to provide more evidence of amendments and council actions. I also filed an ordinance with Councilor Liz Breadon to extend hybrid meetings during and after the pandemic.

2. **Public Records Law.** Massachusetts is one of only two states where the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Judiciary claim full exemption from the public records laws. Would you support eliminating this exemption?

YES

3. **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 for privacy as is the case with all public records?
YES
- c. Reader-friendly summaries of bills currently in or reported out of committee?
YES

4. **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

5. **State House Culture.** Do you support the creation an independent commission to investigate and report on complaints of workplace and sexual harassment in the Massachusetts Legislature?

YES

6. **Public Campaign Financing.** Our campaign finance system favors incumbency and discriminates against potential candidates who do not have a ready pool of wealthy donors. Do you support the creation of a robust public financing system for state elections?

YES

7. **Removing Barriers to Running.** The cost of child care can prove prohibitive to working mothers or fathers seeking to run for office. Would you support legislation to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for child care?

YES

8. **Voting Access.** Which of the following policies to increase voter participation do you support?

- a. Election Day Registration, i.e., eliminating the 20-day voter registration cutoff?

YES

- b. The expansion of early voting to municipal elections and primaries?

YES

- c. The expansion of opportunities to vote-by-mail (namely, mailing every eligible voter a ballot)?

YES

- d. Ending the disenfranchisement of prisoners serving with felony convictions (Their right to vote was taken away by ballot twenty years ago)?

YES

H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

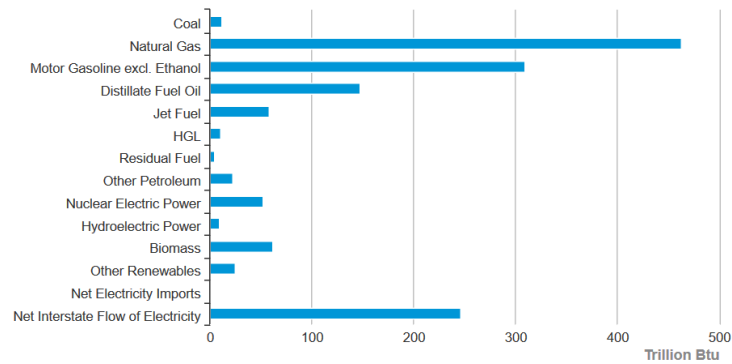
As a coastal state, Massachusetts will be hit particularly hard by climate change, but we are not responding with the necessary urgency. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions need to be [halved by 2030](#) and brought to net zero by 2050. In 2016, the Massachusetts Supreme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

Public transit must play a role in decarbonizing our transportation system, as well as advancing complementary goals of equity and inclusion. However, Massachusetts politicians have lost their understanding of public transit as a public good that benefits all residents and businesses in Massachusetts, not just those who use it in their daily lives. The greatest evidence of this is their neglect

of the MBTA: its debt has grown to nearly [\\$5 billion](#), and it would need [more than \\$10 billion](#) to bring infrastructure and equipment up to a state of good repair. Regional Transit Authorities that serve communities, including Gateway Cities across the state, face enormous capital needs as well.

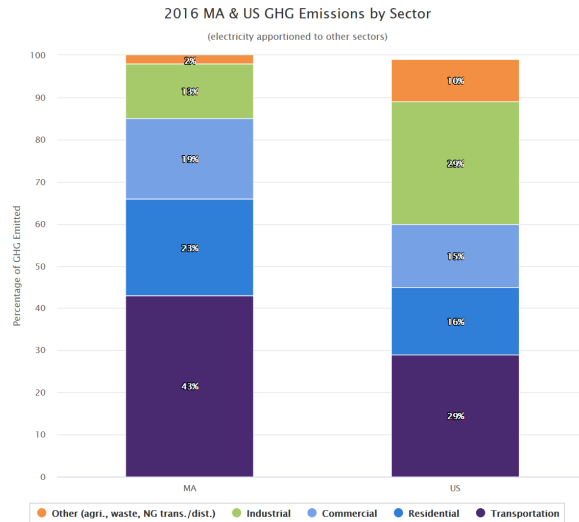
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

Massachusetts Energy Consumption Estimates, 2017



Source: Energy Information Administration, State Energy Data System

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



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

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

[Issues | Lydia for Senate \(lydiaedwards.org\)](http://lydiaedwards.org)

Every person in our Commonwealth has the right to clear air and water, but for too long, low-income communities, immigrants and people of color have faced disproportionate levels of pollution while also being denied opportunity in the green economy.

As a city councilor, Lydia Edwards has fought against corporate polluters and pressed for investment in clean energy and public transit. She’s worked to cut pollution from Logan Airport and pushed Massport to invest in air filtration systems for public schools, community centers, and housing. From day one, she opposed Eversource’s poorly-sited electrical substation in East Boston, urging the state to consider [lower-impact, clean energy alternatives](#).

Lydia believes communities deserve control of their energy systems. In the legislature, she’ll work to break up big utilities and restore public control, oversight, and ownership of our electric power system. She’ll also fight to ensure equitable access to energy efficiency and green jobs, especially for those communities most impacted by the climate crisis.

Lydia has voted to support climate resilience investments in Boston’s park systems, protecting both nature and neighborhoods, and supported a Wetlands Protection Ordinance to preserve critical environmental areas. As part of the mitigation from the Suffolk Downs project, Lydia secured increased staffing at the Department of Conservation and Recreation to steward Belle Isle Marsh. Learning from the loss of open space in Boston’s Seaport, Lydia demanded, and secured, permanent conservation restrictions (or in some cases, public ownership) for open and green spaces at Suffolk Downs, and supported expansion of pedestrian paths and bikeways.

Lydia is a strong proponent of affordable water transportation. As communities in the First Suffolk and Middlesex renew efforts to expand water transportation, Lydia will ensure that all people in the communities she serves have the means to get “on board.”

2. **Waste Reduction.** Would you support a statewide ban on single-use shopping bags and a requirement that alternatives be more sustainable?

YES
3. **Renewable Energy.** Do you support a target of 100% renewable electricity and net zero carbon emissions across all sectors by 2030?

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

YES, or alternate green initiatives such as rooftop farming
5. **Fossil Fuel Infrastructure.** Do you oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?

YES
6. **Carbon Pricing.** Do you support imposing a fee on carbon emissions and using some of the revenue to invest in green infrastructure, especially in frontline communities?

YES
7. **Electrifying Public Transit.** Would you support requiring the MBTA to operate a fully electric bus fleet by 2030 and fully electrifying the commuter rail system by 2035, and requiring RTAs to operate fully electric bus fleets by 2035?

YES
8. **Free Public Transit.** Will you oppose any fare increases to the MBTA or regional transit authorities and work toward the goal of fare-free public transit?

YES
9. **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

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.

Some additional policy positions are visible at [Issues | Lydia for Senate \(lydiaedwards.org\)](https://www.lydiaedwards.org/issues). I look forward to working with Progressive Mass as a councilor and, if elected, as a Senator.