



# PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

statewide, grassroots organizing for progressive change in Massachusetts

## 2014 STATE RACES ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

**Date:** February 3, 2014  
**Candidate:** PJ McCann (Paul L. McCann Jr. on the ballot)  
**Office Sought:** State Representative, 13th Suffolk District  
**Party:** Democrat  
**Web Site:** [www.pjmccann.org](http://www.pjmccann.org)

### CANDIDATE CONTACT INFO

Email:  
Mobile Phone:  
Home Phone: NA

### CAMPAIGN CONTACT INFO

Campaign Manager: Lucas Dunn  
Campaign Manager Phone:  
Campaign Manager Email:  
Campaign Office Phone: NA

**RETURN COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES BY MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 5:00PM, BY EMAIL ONLY  
RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE AS (1) WORD FILE AND (2) PDF.**

E-mail completed questionnaire to [deborah@progressivemass.com](mailto:deborah@progressivemass.com).

Please be in touch with Executive Director Deborah Shah with questions, at 917-922-7947 or by email.

***Please compose your answers directly in the document, underneath the question. Limit answers to 250 words or fewer. No attachments.***

### **I. About You**

#### **1. Why are you running for office?**

I am running to represent the 13th Suffolk in the House because I believe that the economic growth and opportunity present in our city and region need to be shared more equitably among residents of all neighborhoods in this district. I am making shared economic opportunity the central focus of my campaign because I think that our Legislature and state government can do much more to create pathways to the middle class through an increased minimum wage, better job training and placement services, and supporting an education system that ensures all children the same opportunities for success. Every day I speak with people who are struggling with anxiety that existing residents and elders will have a harder time staying in the neighborhood, and new residents and families will be priced out of the neighborhood, because of rising housing costs. I have a strong background in affordable housing and economic development issues that will make me an effective advocate for the district, particularly in the area of creating jobs and promoting affordable housing.

#### **2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?**

I have broad experience as an advocate, public servant, policymaker, and attorney that will make me an effective legislator and advocate-in-chief for the district. I have experience drafting legislation that has been signed into law at both the state and local level. I have worked on bills related to expiring-use affordable housing, post-foreclosure neighborhood stabilization and homelessness. As an attorney, I have the skills to stand up for the rights of my constituents, and would take an active role in preserving and protecting the rights of all residents. Since 2010, I have worked as part of an amazing team at the Boston Public Health Commission that works to promote laws and policies at all levels of government that improve health and quality of life for our most vulnerable populations. My professional experience has taught me a great deal about what is necessary to build coalitions and solve problems collaboratively.

#### **3. What do you think is the proper role of government in Massachusetts residents' daily lives?**

I believe that effective government is needed to create the conditions that allow all residents to achieve their fullest potential. These conditions include adequately funded public schools that prepare all students for success, public services that make our neighborhoods safe, livable and healthy. Our government is needed to protect the rights and interests of individuals and groups who are at risk of being marginalized in our society. Government is at its best when it helps to leverage the resources in our communities through partnerships that delivery needed services and resources to our most vulnerable neighbors.

#### **4. If elected, what would be your top three priorities?**

I will focus my legislative efforts on: a) making sure that jobs and economic opportunity are shared more equitably, through job placement initiatives, increased economic development in the district; b) improving quality of life in our urban neighborhoods by working to deliver more violence prevention resources, creating and protecting housing that is affordable to residents of all incomes, improving our public spaces, parks and other public resources that allow residents to live healthier and more engaged lives; c) seeing to it that the residents of all residents of the 13th Suffolk have a state government that is effective, responsive to their needs, and works in closer collaboration with the City of Boston.

## **II. The Issues**

***Please compose your answers directly in the document, underneath the question. Limit answers to 250 words or fewer. No attachments.***

Our questionnaire is focused on economic justice and inequality, as outlined in our Shared Prosperity Agenda (forthcoming). We are interested in your overall philosophy and approach to the components of the Shared Prosperity Agenda, as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.

In each section, **Question 1** seeks your overall view, values, principles and priorities. You do not need to address each item embedded in these first questions; they are suggestions.

In each section, **Question 2** asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.

Additional questions seek your position on specific policies and legislation. At a minimum, please answer “yes” or “no”; you may also provide an explanation of your positions, as appropriate.

### **A. Job Growth and the Economy**

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. Poverty levels continue to increase, while the minimum wage loses value every year. Massachusetts now ranks 8th in the nation for income inequality.

1. Share your personal values and principles on job growth and the economy.  
*How can we improve the economy and economic security for all people? How do we grow the number of good paying jobs in the Commonwealth? How do you view wealth and income inequality, and what would you do about it, if anything?*

I have committed my career to public service and working in the public interest to promote social justice. My commitment to social justice has been a motivating force in all of my professional experiences. I believe that more equitable job growth and an economy that works for all of our residents is the most important issue facing our district, city, and region. While there are a great number of things that the federal government must do to address income inequality, there is also a great deal that can be done at the state and local level to improve the economy. I believe that the Commonwealth can work with employers to help to spread employment opportunities more equitably. I believe that economic development programs can be reformed to ensure that all of our land and built environment resources generate jobs and housing that promotes equity. I would work to promote legislation and budgets that promote these and other priorities that help to rebuild pathways to the middle class.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on job growth and the economy (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I have worked to improve living conditions in the city and region throughout my career, including work to protect affordable housing at risk of loss, create pathways out of homelessness, protect neighborhoods from the foreclosure crisis, and advocate for jobs and housing for the re-entry community. My agency actively works to promote job preparedness and job placement opportunities, in recognition of the strong connection between full employment and positive health outcomes.

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3. **Minimum Wage.** Do you support:
- |   |            |    |
|---|------------|----|
| Raising the wage to at least \$10.50/hour:          | <u>Yes</u> | No |
| Indexing automatic yearly increases to inflation:   | <u>Yes</u> | No |
| Increasing tipped wages to 60% of the minimum wage: | <u>Yes</u> | No |
4. **Unemployment Insurance and Minimum Wage.** As of January 2014, the legislature is negotiating a bill that would pair an increase in the minimum wage with cuts to unemployment insurance. Do you oppose this effort?
- Yes No
5. **Earned Sick Time.** Do you support requiring businesses with more than 11 employees to provide earned, paid sick time to their employees?
- Yes No
6. **Job Creation and Standards.** A "Job Creation and Quality Standards Act" would require corporations that receive any kind of public benefits (grants, tax expenditures procurement contracts) to, in turn, pay a living wage (\$15 per hour plus benefits) to full-time employees. Do you support such legislation?
- Yes No
7. **Employee-Owned Businesses.** Do you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts?
- Yes No
8. **Co-ops, Benefit Corporations, Community Banks.** Do you support legislation that would encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations and the development of community banks?
- Yes No

**B. Education and Workforce Development**

Public education has always been a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. However, the soaring price of higher education over the last several decades has made access to this opportunity increasingly out of reach, at the very moment when higher education makes a greater difference to one's economic future. Meanwhile, powerful corporate interests have been steadily undermining public school teachers and unions and siphoning money from our public K-12 system.

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding public education and workforce training. *What value does public education and workforce development have in improving our economy as well as in addressing matters of economic justice? What measures should the Commonwealth take on these issues? You might address, for example, charter schools, school vouchers, standardized testing and federal programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.*

As a graduate of Massachusetts public schools, I have a deep understanding of the work that remains to be done to close the achievement gap and achieve equity in our schools. I believe that universal early education, including pre-k and full-day kindergarten, is an achievable goal that would do much to give all students a level playing field. I also believe that the Commonwealth must do a better job at providing the supports needed for all students, but particularly low-income students, English language learners, and special needs students. I think all of these reforms and more must be made in collaboration with teachers and administrators. I believe state policy can do more to give teachers the training and tools they need to help all students achieve their full potential.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on education and workforce development (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

In the past, I have worked as a camp counselor at a program that worked in Boston Housing Authority developments. My time volunteering with children and families struggling in public schools has informed my views on improving public education.

3. **Achievement gaps.** What would you do to address persistent racial and economic achievement gaps in education?

As stated above, I believe the Commonwealth can do much more to provide teachers and schools with the resources to fully support schools and students with the highest needs, including ELL/ESL, SPED and low-income students. In addition to these increased resources, I think the public education system must provide universal Pre-K and better prepare all high school students to graduate with the skills needed to succeed in the workforce and college.

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

Yes      No

5. **Universal higher education.** Do you support a program that provides free, publicly funded higher education for every student who wants it?

Yes      No

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6. **Funding Structure.** Do you support changes to the Chapter 70 Education formula, including the Foundation Budget, to incorporate proper state funding for ELL students, Special Education students, transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction?

Yes      No

**C. Health Care**

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health care insurance coverage. However, we still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding health care insurance, delivery and outcomes.

As a public health official, I strongly value access to care, and the creation of a better healthcare delivery system that improves health outcomes for all while also reducing persistent health inequities. The insurance and delivery system can do much more to ensure adequate preventative care, including the provision of appropriate primary care. The Boston Public Health Commission and the City of Boston have worked to promote the use of community health centers over costly emergency room visits and improve care. I believe the Commonwealth has an enormous role as a payer to shift the delivery of care to improve care and reduce health inequities.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

At the Boston Public Health Commission, I have worked as part of a team that has successfully advocated for laws and systems changes that have improved the healthcare system, including funding for public health prevention initiatives in payment reform. We have worked with insurance providers to improve coverage for preventative services for smoking cessation. Our organization advocates each year for budgets that adequately fund public health, dental care, substance abuse services, homeless services, and violence prevention, among numerous other line items and bills that improve the ability of our residents to live healthier lives.

3. **Single Payer and Public Option.** Do you support moving Massachusetts to Single Payer insurance?

Yes      No

What role might a Public Option play, in your view?

I think a Public Option could play an important role in moving the insurance market to more effectively provide preventative care and primary care that will ultimately reduce overall healthcare costs.

4. **Costs and Quality.** What steps would you take to lower health care costs while maintaining or improving health outcomes?

As noted above, I believe access to primary care in appropriate settings, including community health centers and community hospitals has the potential to be the best approach to limiting health care costs. I would advocate for measures to ensure access to primary care treatment. I will also continue to be a strong advocate for funding of preventative care and reproductive care for all women. I also believe that public health measures, including holistic approaches to asthma prevention, tobacco control, and substance abuse prevention, can help to drive down health care costs.

5. **Mental Health.** What steps would you take to address the gap in affordable mental health services?

Despite federal legislation to promote parity between mental healthcare and healthcare, this goal is still tragically far off due to many factors, including delayed implementation. I would advocate for measures to ensure that the healthcare system in Massachusetts, and the health insurance system in particular, provides the same level of coverage and care for mental health services. I understand the difficulty that residents in this district in particular face in finding beds in mental health treatment facilities and finding referrals to mental health professionals. I think the entire system of providing mental health services must function much better and I will work tirelessly to help individual constituents while seeking to improve the system.

6. **Health disparities.** What steps would you take to reduce racial and income disparities in health outcomes?

At the Boston Public Health Commission, I have been involved in our Racial Justice and Health Equity initiative as a facilitator of full-day staff trainings that help staff build the skills to develop policy and systems approaches to reducing health inequities. A core message of this training is that the determinants of health inequities extend far beyond the field of public health, and include educational opportunity, employment opportunity, and quality of life measures. I also understand that policy approaches are needed to address structural racism and eliminate racism and its legacy in our economic system. If elected, I will work in partnership with organizations like the Boston Public Health Commission that are setting targets for reducing inequities and working to take strategic and collaborative action to address the root causes of differences in health outcomes.

7. **Standards of care and cost.** Do you support establishing a state panel of experts (such as the Affordable Care Act's IPAB/"Independent Payment Advisory Board") to recommend high-value and cost-effective services?

Yes      No

8. **Pharmaceutical companies.** Do you support prohibiting pharmaceutical companies from including direct-to-consumer drug advertising as tax-deductible expense?

Yes      No

9. **Bulk prescription programs.** Do you support establishing a bulk prescription drug program that would provide lower cost prescription drugs for public employees?

Yes      No

Do you support establishing this same program for *all* Massachusetts residents?

Yes      No



**D. Housing**

In the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased, federal and state. Currently there is a 10-year waiting list for a rental voucher, and the average rent for a two bedroom apartment requires a wage 50% higher than the median Massachusetts wage. Half of families in Greater Boston alone pay over 30% of their income in housing and utilities costs—and 25% of households pay *more than half* their income to housing. 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.

1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing. *How would you ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it, within reasonable distance of job opportunities? How would you address the need to link housing, jobs and transportation? How would you tackle homelessness?*

As my resume (available at [www.pjmccann.com/experience](http://www.pjmccann.com/experience)) shows, I have a strong track record in developing and advocating for solutions to the lack of quality, affordable housing. I have worked on and drafted bills to preserve expiring-use affordable housing, return bank-owned properties to productive use, increase the development of housing units and housing preferences for placing homeless individuals and families. I have an academic background, including my undergraduate thesis and law school coursework that gives me a strong understanding of the housing subsidy and community development systems in Massachusetts and Boston. I would leverage my experience to advocate for preservation of existing housing, far more MRVP vouchers, and policies to ensure placement and supportive services for homeless veterans, individuals, and families. I also think the Commonwealth needs to do much more to make sure that our underutilized publicly-owned and privately-owned parcels in the city – particularly those near transit – are developed in a way that ensures more quality affordable housing, equitable employment opportunities, and more livable, vibrant communities.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

See above, and resume at [www.pjmccann.org/experience](http://www.pjmccann.org/experience). I firmly believe that housing development and subsidy policy at the state level is an issue that can have positive impacts on the regional economy, and more importantly, the ability for all of our residents to live healthy, fulfilling, and productive lives.

3. **Housing Authorities.** Governor Patrick has proposed consolidating the Housing Authorities to six regional authorities, from the current 242 authorities. The legislature appears reluctant to agree to this reform, in part because it would reduce local control. What is your position?

I support Housing Authority reform to the extent that it allows for public housing and vouchers to be administered more effectively and provide healthy, stable housing for the highest number of families. If resources and oversight are shared responsibly, more effective management and economies of scale can be achieved without sacrificing local input and involvement in housing policy decisions. Much of the public housing stock in Massachusetts is in need of significant reinvestment. State and local government need to work together to address the significant challenges faced by public housing residents and voucher recipients.

4. **Affordable Housing.** What would you do to increase the number of affordable housing units in the State? What would you do to ensure that no low-income family has to spend more than 50% of their income on housing and related expenses; and that fewer than a quarter of families spending more than 33% of income on shelter?

The key underlying cause of the affordability crisis facing the region is the lack of supply and the failure for the new housing market to provide for individuals and families across the income spectrum. There are proven policy solutions that need to be built upon and improved to ensure that more affordable housing units are built and address racial and income segregation. Boston's Inclusionary Development Policy, for example, creates a framework to ensure that new housing developments include affordable housing. I think a strengthening of local policies like this, and adoption of stronger inclusionary development policies at the state level could help to make housing more affordable and equitable. In light of the failure of the federal government to adequately fund affordable housing production, the Commonwealth needs to revisit its system of funding and incentives. The legislature should play a stronger role in making sure that there is adequate funding for the state to play a stronger role in actively promoting housing equity.

5. **Temporary Housing Transitions.** What would you do to move homeless families and individuals out of motels and shelters and into permanent housing?

I helped to draft and promote *H 2118, An Act Relative to Eliminating Homelessness*, which was filed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino and a portion of which was signed into law. This legislation sought to require all housing authorities in the state to adopt preferences similar to the Boston Housing Authority's to place homeless individuals and families, ensure housing counseling services before discharge from prisons and other institutions, and encourage the development of new units and housing vouchers earmarked for homeless families in all state-funded developments. If elected, I would advocate for these permanent, systems-based solutions to homelessness. I would seek to reform public assistance systems to allow low-income families to establish assets and begin on a path to self-sufficiency.

6. **Regulation Reform, Development and Preservation.** Would you support reforms to update our outmoded zoning, subdivision, and planning laws, in such a way as to encourage balanced development and land preservation?

Yes      No

**E. Revenue and Taxation**

Because of income tax cuts and the effects of the recession, Massachusetts has lost nearly \$3 billion in revenue over the last 12 years. We now collect less revenue than 21 other states, and our tax revenue is below the national average. Since 1982, local aid has dropped 58%. Cuts to the moderately progressive state income tax has meant increasing reliance on fees, sales, gas and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressiveness of our revenue. Regressive taxation strains low- and middle-income families, and reduced revenue collection curtails our ability to invest in vital infrastructure.

1. What principles do you bring to considerations of state revenue and tax reform (individual and corporate)? *How should we raise more revenue to adequately fund our communities for the future?*

The central principle that I bring to the discussion about state revenue is fairness. Massachusetts is a place of enormous wealth and prosperity. I believe that the Commonwealth should be able to provide the best public education system, improve our transportation infrastructure, and deliver all other necessary public services and local aid with a modest revenue reforms that do not burden low and middle-income families. As a legislator, I will seek to build compromise and consensus necessary to adequately fund our priorities.

2. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on revenue and taxation (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I have supported revenue proposals where needed to meet the Commonwealth's responsibilities to its citizens. I would continue to support revenues while also seeking ways to reduce the cost of government without sacrificing public services.

3. **Tax Rates for Upper Incomes.** Do you support increasing income taxes on the wealthiest residents of Massachusetts?

Yes      No

4. **Automatic Tax Decrease Triggers.** Do you support halting the automatic decrease in state tax when Massachusetts state revenues grow four quarters in a row?

Yes      No

5. **Capital Gains.** Do you support increasing the capital gains tax (with safeguards to protect seniors)?

Yes      No

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6. **Progressive Taxation.** “An Act to Invest in Our Communities” was designed to raise significant revenue while making our tax code more progressive, but it has not passed the legislature. Would you support a renewed effort to pass this or similar legislation?

Yes      No

7. **Corporate Tax Breaks.** Do you support eliminating or substantially reducing corporate tax breaks?

Yes      No

Do you support repealing or significantly reducing the Film Production Tax Credit?

Yes      No

8. **Clawbacks and Transparency in Corporate Tax Breaks.** Do you support increasing corporate tax break transparency and clawback provisions?

Yes      No

9. **Graduated Income Tax.** Would you support a state constitutional amendment creating a Massachusetts progressive income tax?

Yes      No

**IV. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

***Please compose your answers directly in the document, underneath the question.  
Limit answers to 250 words or fewer. No attachments.***

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.

I believe that my record as a dedicated public servant committed to finding effective policy solutions to some of our most challenging social justice issues, including health inequities, homelessness, affordable housing, neighborhood stabilization and environmental justice prepares me to work as an effective advocate for all residents of my district and would make me a valuable ally in the House of Representatives for anyone seeking to advance social justice through the legislative process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.