

**Justice For Massachusetts  
2018 DA Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate Name:** Linda Champion, Esq.  
Phone #: 617-544-5105  
Email: Champion@championforda.com  
Website: www.championforda.com

**Social Media**

Facebook page: Linda Champion  
Twitter handle: @championforda

**Grass Roots Support**

List grassroots leaders/Organizations that are supporting your candidacy:  
NAICFM (Boston Chapter);

**Please email responses to [justiceformassachusetts@gmail.com](mailto:justiceformassachusetts@gmail.com)  
If there are any questions, please call 617-722-4320**

**The Questionnaire is due April 27<sup>th</sup>**

In 2018, it is clearer than ever that our criminal justice system is damaging the lives and life chances of individuals and communities, especially individuals and communities of color. It is doing so at the expense of real community safety and at huge expense in public resources. Big change is needed if we are to have a system that truly serves justice. We believe DA's have a central role to play in making that change happen--both in setting policies for prosecution and in advocating for laws to reform our criminal justice system.

**General Questions**

- 1) What experience do you have that will prepare you to reshape the criminal justice system through the DA's office? I worked in Suffolk County all courts (Juvenile, District & Superior). I have successfully implemented & used alternatives such as probation prior to arraignment.
- 2) What do you think about the growing prison population? What role with your DA's office take in reducing it? The cost per inmate is \$50K per year. We need to reduce pre-trial detention and reserve it for those held for violent offenses which require detention to keep the public/victim safe.
- 3) What are your thoughts on the War on Drugs? I feel the 80s-90s approach does not work. People struggling with addiction need help and access to detox and we have to be patient as they go through the process.
- 4) Do you believe there is under-representation of women or people of color working in the court system? If so, how would you work to correct the problem?  
I worked in Dorchester District Court and Roxbury District Court and I worked with a number of women of color so those two courts did not reflect the diversity issues we face throughout Suffolk County. Diversity is important because it helps you make an evaluation factors in cultural differences.

5) Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and better access?

No. This is why as a community lawyer I made it a priority to answer questions from the community and to file emergency litigation to protect the rights of residents when needed, often pro bono.

6) What efforts will you take to increase language access for immigrants that's beyond the right to a court interpreter? My mother is Korean and I know first hand how difficult it is

to navigate. We need a multi-lingual staff of advocates, support staff and prosecutors. We hire and offer language course to those willing to learn.

7) What will you do to ensure that the community stays up to date on the changes you have made as District Attorney? How do you propose that the community should hold you accountable for the commitments you make during your

campaign? We will provide to the community all notices of policy changes. The Office of the DA is an additional resource for the the community. We all need to work together to make sure the office is serving the needs of the community.

### Alternatives to incarceration:

1) What specific types of programs (please give examples of programs in other jurisdictions) will you implement or expand to deal with issues of mental illness?

*My priority is to hire and retain 3 mental health professionals who will work for the office and help me determine best practices.*

2) How do you plan to handle issues that arise with children in school ending up in court?

I personally handled school based offenses. All non-violent offenses need to be handled by school and parents. Violent offenses need to come in so we can create a plan for success with the child, law enforcement, defense bar & parents.

3) Will you commit to establishing and fully funding a pre-arraignment diversion program that allows people arrested for petty offenses, including low-level drug possession or sale, to get the help and support they need without needlessly exposing them to the consequences of a criminal conviction? If not what specific steps will you take to create avenues for defendants to be diverted away from

criminal prosecution? I hope to eliminate all non-violent petty/drug offenses. I need to focus on violent offense. I need to rebuild the community trust and the prosecutors need to start doing 10-15 hours each week of community service. We need to dismiss petty offenses with a fine or community service.

4) Will you commit to expanding pre-trial services? Which services will you commit to expanding or developing?

I don't want to expand services. I want to get people out of the system. I am the only candidate who has worked directly with families (over 100 each year) providing complete wrap around services to build economic stability, poverty brings crime. I know if we do outreach early, help with job training, offer funding towards housing (victims/witnesses), and build trauma team.

5) What percentage of your budget will you commit to establishing and supporting community vetted alternatives to incarceration?

I have to look at the budget first. I am committed to adding a line item but I don't know the % at this time.

6) Will you commit to diverting or dismissing all simple possession drug cases?

I don't plan on prosecuting simple possession drug cases. Those individuals need to be provided with a list of resources to help with their addition. A person struggling with substance abuse will never be successful in a criminal justice system until they are stable.

I would however like to think outside the box and look to partner with area hospitals to see if people can participate in pilot programs.

### Charging/Pre-Trial:

1) Will you commit to not requesting cash bail in all misdemeanor and low-level felony cases?

Bail is to ensure the persons return to answer to the charge. If someone his homeless, battling an addition or suffering from ptsd it could be hard for them to follow-up and follow-through. We have to start taking a more holistic approach and for misdemeanor try to resolve at arraignment if victimless and for low-level felony it will depend on facts/circumstances.

2) More and more youth are being held in adult jails before they even reach trial. As DA, what would you do to keep children out of the system?

We cannot mix children with adults. It is not only unhealthy it can be dangerous for the child especially if we are trying to redirect the behavior.

3) Tens of thousands of people are under correctional control for minor non-dangerous misdemeanor offenses. What will your office do to limit unnecessary criminal prosecution for those accused of minor non-dangerous offenses? Will your office commit to reducing the number of misdemeanors charged in cases where there is no threat to public safety?

Yes, I need to get rid of the petty and non-violent offense. We have to clear the docket and focus on serious violent offenses. As a District Court prosecutor I juggled 400-600 cases and you have to focus on those serious offenses and dispose of the rest.

4) In many cases a minor criminal charge can have devastating immigration consequences. What will you do to work with our immigrant populations to ensure they are exposed to additional punitive consequences? Would your office commit to

considering immigration consequences for defendants as part of determining what to charge? Additionally, would you institute guidance and education for your prosecutors to avoid extreme immigration penalties (i.e. deportation)?

*I plan to retain for the office an immigration attorney to address and train on collateral consequences. We need office to have full understanding of Lunn v. Commonwealth and we need to allow U-Visa for victims and witnesses.*

- 5) Will your office create and share clear policies that detail when and why you will use sentencing enhancements? *Yes.*
- 6) Will your office commit to using independent prosecutors to investigate cases of alleged police brutality? *I am capable of completing the investigation; however, I understand we need to rebuild trust and I am willing to work with community and together create a process the community will feel comfortable with so we can move forward towards change.*
- 7) Are there mandatory minimums you will commit to stop using to pressure people into pleading guilty? If not, why not? If so, which? *As I have said on the campaign trail. I do not support min. mandatory sentences because we need to factor in mitigating circumstances.*
- 8) What efforts will you take to identify cases where individual uses the criminal system for retaliatory purposes? *I have seen people use the criminal justice system to hurt others especially in restraining orders and seeking to obtain and use them in a retaliatory way. We need to always be aware our job is only to seek and find the truth and to not have clouded judgment.*

#### **Administrative:**

- 1) In many prosecutor's offices, prosecutor performance is measured by their conviction rates. Would you commit to using alternative metrics you would use to measure prosecutorial performance? If so, which? *I was never measured by my conviction rates. No one ever asked me my conviction rates as a prosecutor.*
- 2) Will you commit to collecting and sharing data with the public? Would your office commit to collecting demographic data (e.g., race, gender and sexual orientation) about who is charged, what they are charged with, what plea is offered and what bail is recommended? *Yes.*
- 3) Will you commit to making the raw data (above) available to the public (of course this would exclude personally identifying information)? *Yes.*
- 4) Would your office commit to an open file policy that provides defendants with information about their prosecution as early as possible? *Yes, and I also want to implement a new computer database similar to the one I use at the DIA so defense/defendants see information/evidence as soon as it is received and can login to retrieve the information they need.*

#### **Wage Theft:**

- 1) Wage theft is often left to attorney generals or civil lawsuit to be dealt with instead of being prosecuted as theft. Will you commit to use your office to prosecute employers who are stealing wages? *No, this is for the Office of the Attorney General.*

#### **Civil Forfeiture:**

- 1) In what circumstances will your office move for civil forfeiture? *When a person has been found guilty of a crime. All other property must be returned to the owner.*

#### **Post-Conviction:**

- 1) What steps will you take to reduce re-incarceration for people who pose no public danger but have violated their supervision? *We can't have long probation periods or conditions of release that create a hardship. People are less likely to be successful. We will advocate in these instances for no detention.*

#### **Lobbying:**

- 1) How will you use your public and political influence to reduce mass incarceration and racial disparity in the criminal justice system? *We need to have data and transparency. The data will show us where we need to focus our efforts in order to fix/change things.*
  
- 2) Will you support the following State legislative proposals:
  - Ending cash bail? *We need cash bail in some cases. So, no.*
  - Increasing the age at which an offender is charged in juvenile court? *This has been done under new criminal justice reform bill.*
  - Repealing mandatory minimums? *Yes, I don't support mandatory sentencing.*
  
- 3) Key to the integrity of our criminal defense system is the right of defendants to meaningful representation throughout the criminal justice process. There have been huge cuts in the budget of public defenders that have made it hard for them to do their job. Will you advocate for fully funded public defense at the local and state level? *Absolutely, and I will also mandate prosecutors make sure defense bar are given evidence in a timely manner. The prosecutors should work towards rehabilitation and resolution with the defense bar. Both the prosecutors and defense bar must be mindful to not keep anyone unnecessarily detained.*