

**PROGRESSIVE MASS**  
**LEGISLATIVE**  
**AGENDA**



**191st LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2019-**

**2020**

**INFO/FACT SHEETS**

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## FACT SHEET: Tax Fairness



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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**S.16 / H.86:** *Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution to provide resources for education and transportation through an additional tax on incomes in excess of one million dollars (Lewis - O'Day)*

#### Why is this bill important?

Massachusetts has one of the most extreme levels of income inequality in the country. From 1979 through 2011, incomes of the Top 1% in Massachusetts grew ten times faster than incomes of households in the Bottom 90%. These highest-income households captured just under half of all income growth in the state.

During the same period, Massachusetts reduced taxes by more than all but two other states. As a result, those who have benefited the most, now pay a smaller share of their income in state and local taxes than the rest of the population. Less revenue in the state budget means less funding for public schools and public infrastructure -- the bedrocks of our economy.

#### What does this bill do?

The Fair Share Amendment would amend the Massachusetts Constitution to create an additional tax of 4% on annual income above \$1 million, so only those with the highest incomes would pay a little more. The approximately \$2 billion in new revenue generated by this tax would be spent on quality public education, affordable public colleges and universities, and repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, and public transportation. To ensure that the tax continues to apply only to the highest income residents, the \$1 million threshold would be adjusted each year to reflect cost-of-living increases.

In order to appear on the November 2022 ballot, the Fair Share Amendment must receive two consecutive 50% votes of the constitutional convention: one from the 2019/2020 Legislature, and another from the 2021/2022 Legislature.

#### More Information

- American Society of Civil Engineers. "Massachusetts Infrastructure Overview." 2017. <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/massachusetts/>.
- "Funding Improvements for Schools, Roads, and Public Transit with Tax Reforms that Improve Fairness." Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. January 18, 2018. [http://www.massbudget.org/reports/pdf/Education\\_and\\_Transportation\\_Amendment\\_UPDATED\\_01-16-2018.pdf](http://www.massbudget.org/reports/pdf/Education_and_Transportation_Amendment_UPDATED_01-16-2018.pdf).
- "How Has the Level of Taxes in Massachusetts Changed Compared to Other States?" Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. November 20, 2018. [http://massbudget.org/report\\_window.php?loc=How-Has-the-Level-of-Taxes-in-Massachusetts-Changed-Compared-to-Other-States.html](http://massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=How-Has-the-Level-of-Taxes-in-Massachusetts-Changed-Compared-to-Other-States.html).

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## FACT SHEET: Public Education



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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## **S.238 / H.586: An Act providing rightful opportunities and meaningful investment for successful and equitable education (PROMISE) (Chang-Diaz - Keefe/Vega)**

### Why is this bill important?

Massachusetts is the birthplace of public education in the US, and we have reason to pride ourselves in our system. Our public schools routinely rank first in the nation because of high standardized test scores and postsecondary degree attainment rates. However, such high overall scores mask persistent inequities that continue to pose an obstacle to children's ability to realize their full potential. The achievement gap between low-income and better-off students is one of the highest in the nation, as are disparities in per-pupil spending.

The Foundation Budget, established in 1993 by the Education Reform Act, was intended as a starting point for funding school districts across the Commonwealth, based on the circumstances and needs of each student. Now, more than a quarter century later, the assumptions underlying the funding formula are in desperate need of updating. Last term, the Legislature failed to act to fully update the formula based on the recommendations of the 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission, which made specific recommendations to bring education spending in line with current needs.

### What does this bill do?

The PROMISE Act acknowledges that the local education aid formula developed in 1993 is now well out-of-date. The 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission found that Massachusetts is underestimating the cost of K-12 education by \$1-2 billion each year.

To address this, the bill would authorize a multi-year phase-in of the Foundation Budget Review Commission recommendations in order to

- Realistically account for districts' **health care** costs
- Accurately project **special education** costs, and
- Modernize the **English Language Learner (ELL)** and **low-income** components of the formula.

It would also establish a Data Advisory Task Force to make sure funds are distributed to communities in need, and create a system to update the formula yearly as needed. Moreover, it ensures low-income, health care, and minimum aid provisions are all implemented at the same pace, so no district gets left behind, and ensures that all public school students receive their promised aid from the state after accounting for tuition payments paid by the public school districts to charter schools.

### More Information

- "Education Spending Across Massachusetts," Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. Accessed February 1, 2019. [massbudget.org/tool\\_window.php?loc=education\\_by\\_district.html](http://massbudget.org/tool_window.php?loc=education_by_district.html).
- Foundation Budget Review Commission. *Foundation Budget Review Commission: Final Report*. Boston: Massachusetts General Court, 2015. [mass.gov/legis/journal/desktop/2015/fbrc.pdf](http://mass.gov/legis/journal/desktop/2015/fbrc.pdf).
- Shuster, Luc. "Ed Reform at 20: What's Worked, What's Changed, What's Next." Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. June 18, 2013. [massbudget.org/report\\_window.php?loc=ed\\_reform\\_twenty.html](http://massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=ed_reform_twenty.html).
- "Quality Counts 2017." *Education Week* 36, no. 16 (January 2017). [edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/](http://edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/).

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## FACT SHEET: Higher Education



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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#### **S.744 / H.1221: *An Act to Guarantee Debt-Free Public Higher Education*** (Eldridge - Higgins)

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Today, the average graduate from our state universities and the UMass system leaves with over \$30,000 in student debt—the tenth highest in the country. The average debt for graduates of public, four-year postsecondary schools grew faster in Massachusetts than in all but one other state from 2004 to 2016.

The reason for such growth is clear: steep cuts in state support for public higher education have contributed to some of the highest tuition and fees increases in the nation from 2001 to 2016. The share of costs borne by students and their families doubled over this period, putting a degree out of reach for more and more students.

A postsecondary degree provides a proven premium in lifetime wages for graduates and countless other opportunities. Cost should not be a barrier. By preventing young people from living independently, buying a home, or pursuing their career of choice, college debt is a drag on our economy. Even when students drop out due to cost, they can be saddled with debt for years after.

##### **What does this bill do?**

This bill would guarantee free public higher education as a right for all residents of Massachusetts, and create a grant program to pay the full cost of tuition and fees for eligible students at any Massachusetts public college or university, or at certificate, vocational, or training programs at a public institution, up to the equivalent of four years of public college or university.

This aid would not affect students' eligibility for other state grants, gift aid, institutional aid, or federal aid, enabling them to use such aid for textbooks, housing, and food, all of which many students struggle to afford today.

To be eligible for this program, students must (a) be a Massachusetts resident or have attained a high school diploma or its equivalent in the Commonwealth; (b) be admitted to and enrolled full-time or part-time in a Massachusetts public college or university or other public certificate, vocational, or other adult education program; and (c) maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above.

##### **More Information**

- Shuster, Luc and Colin Jones. "Debt-Free Higher Education: What Would It Take?" Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. July 16, 2015. [http://www.massbudget.org/report\\_window.php?loc=Debt-Free+Public+Higher+Education.html](http://www.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Debt-Free+Public+Higher+Education.html).
- Thompson, Jeremy. "Educated and Encumbered: Student Debt Rising with Higher Education Funding Falling in Massachusetts." Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. March 1, 2018. [http://www.massbudget.org/report\\_window.php?loc=Educated-and-Encumbered.html](http://www.massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=Educated-and-Encumbered.html).
- Zhao, Bo. "Disinvesting in the Future? A Comprehensive Examination of the Effects of State Appropriations for Public Higher Education." Working Paper 18-1. Boston: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2018. <https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/research-department-working-paper/2018/a-comprehensive-examination-of-the-effects-of-state-appropriations-for-public-higher-education.aspx>.

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## FACT SHEET: Child Care and Early Education



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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## **S.288 / H.470: An Act Relative to Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care (Friedman - Gordon)**

### Why is this bill important?

Massachusetts is the least affordable state for child care for infants (\$20,125 annually) and toddlers (\$18,586 annually), and among the least affordable states for four-year-old care (\$14,256). Single parents pay more than two-thirds of their income for infant center care, and child care for married parents with two children living at the poverty line would cost more than the family makes in a year.

Massachusetts offers subsidized child care for low-income families, but not enough funding to serve all eligible children. The subsidy waitlist is almost 20,000 children, including infants, toddlers, and preschool-age and school-age children. For families above the subsidy eligibility limit, the high cost of care can still be prohibitive.

“Child care deserts,” where the supply of licensed care is much lower than demand, exist throughout the state, and child care programs have difficulty recruiting and retaining educators, due in part to chronically low salaries.

Early child care and education investments are a win-win-win. As birth to age 5 is the period of maximal brain development, quality care and education programs can have lasting benefits for children’s academic performance. Such programs benefit parents by enabling them to go to work, and they benefit society as a whole as children grow up to be productive, contributing citizens.

### What does this bill do?

This bill, currently being crafted by advocates, would guarantee that all children in Massachusetts have access to affordable, high-quality early education and child care, including care during non-standard work hours; and ensure appropriate professional development and compensation for early education and care providers.

### More Information

- Child Care Aware of America. *US and the High Cost of Child Care: A Review of Prices and Proposed Solutions for a Broken System*. Arlington, VA: Child Care Aware of America, 2018. <https://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/costofcare/>.
- Gould, Elise and Tanyell Cooke. “High Quality Child Care Is Out of Reach for Working Families.” Issue Brief #404. Economic Policy Institute. October 6, 2015. <https://www.epi.org/publication/child-care-affordability/>.
- Haywoode, Alyssa. “Tracking Massachusetts’ Child Care Deserts.” *Eye on Early Education*. October 26, 2017. <https://eyeonearlyeducation.com/2017/10/26/tracking-massachusetts-child-care-deserts/>.
- Schulman, Karen and Helen Blank. *Persistent Gaps: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2017*. Washington, DC: National Women’s Law Center. <https://nwlc.org/press-releases/child-care-is-out-of-reach-for-many-low-income-families-new-nwlc-report-shows/>.

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## FACT SHEET: Health Care



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#### **S.683 / H.1194: An Act establishing Medicare for All in Massachusetts (Eldridge - Sabadosa/Garlick)**

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Although MA's 2006 health care reform bill and the 2010 Affordable Care Act were significant steps forward, we have not yet achieved the goal of universal, affordable, and high-quality health coverage. Quality of coverage and care still highly correlates with income, and racial disparities persist. Rising health care costs are destroying state, municipal, business, and household budgets. Massachusetts has the highest per capita health care costs in the country, and every year costs go higher and higher.

A single payer system would save an estimated 15.75% of our current spending on health care; take the burden of rising health care costs off of small businesses, municipalities, and families; eliminate medical debt and medical bankruptcy; and finally guarantee access to quality, affordable health care as a right for all residents of the Commonwealth.

##### **What does this bill do?**

This bill would create a Medicare for All "single-payer" system for Massachusetts: a universal public insurance plan covering all medically necessary care. This plan would function for residents under 65 much the way Medicare does for residents 65 and older, but without premiums or copayments.

The bill would replace current employer and employee premium payments with an employer and employee payroll tax. The total payroll tax would be 10% – the same as current average spending on health insurance – and would default to 7.5% for employers and 2.5% for employees, although employers could choose to pay for part or all of employees' portion of the payroll tax, and collective bargaining agreements would be recognized. A tax of 12.5% on unearned income would bring progressivity to the bill's funding scheme. Lastly, all current state spending on health care would be consolidated, and the state would seek a federal waiver to have federal funds (e.g., for Medicare and Medicaid patients) paid directly to the state's single payer fund.

##### **More Information**

- *Annual Health Cost Trends Report 2016*. Boston: Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, 2017. <http://www.mass.gov/anf/budget-taxes-and-procurement/oversight-agencies/health-policy-commission/publications/>.
- Dickman, Samuel, David Himmelstein, and Steffie Woolhandler. "Inequality and the Health-Care System in the USA." *Lancet* 389, no. 100 (April 2017): 1431-1441. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30398-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30398-7/fulltext).
- *The Geography of Uninsurance in Massachusetts, 2009-2013*. Boston: Blue Cross Foundation, 2015. <http://bluecrossfoundation.org/publication/geography-uninsurance-massachusetts-2009-2013>.
- Schoen, Cathy, Susan Hayes, Sara Collins, Jacob Lippa, and David Radley. *America's Underinsured: A State-by-State Look at Health Insurance Affordability Prior to the New Coverage Expansions*. New York: Commonwealth Fund, 2014. <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/fund-reports/2014/mar/americas-underinsured>.

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## FACT SHEET: Affordable Housing



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#### **S.773 / H.1769: An Act supporting affordable housing with a local option for a fee to be applied to certain real estate transactions (Boncore - Connolly)**

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Massachusetts has an affordable housing crisis, and municipalities need new tools to address it. Throughout the Commonwealth, more and more communities are identifying the costs of housing and displacement of long-term residents as one of their most critical problems. Ongoing population shifts and economic trends have put more and more upward pressure on rents, home prices, and construction costs. Skyrocketing housing prices contributed to Massachusetts experiencing the second largest increase in homeless population in the nation between 2017 and 2018.

Communities today need more housing but lack the resources to build housing their own residents can afford. Although a housing shortage exists across the board, the housing market is segmented, and simply building more housing at the top without addressing issues of affordability and displacement is not going to resolve challenges faced by low- and moderate- income people. A local option transfer fee could help cities and towns build a new supply of affordable housing and enable production that meets all residents' needs. Municipalities could enact and adjust a transfer fee when, where, and at a level that makes sense for their own local real estate market and with other conditions or constraints in mind.

##### **What does this bill do?**

The local option transfer fee legislation enables cities and towns to assess a fee of 0.5-2% on residential and commercial real estate transactions, with the funds allocated to affordable housing trust funds. Each city and town would set the actual rate and determine the type of transactions which would be included or exempted (e.g., residential vs. commercial, transactions involving owner occupants vs. investors, transactions involving low-income seniors or persons with disabilities, etc.), and whether the fee was paid by the buyer or seller. The fee would be paid to the jurisdiction's properly constituted Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and funds could only be used to address housing affordability in accordance with the rules and guidelines governing the Trust Fund. Similar fees are already in place in San Francisco, New York, and Washington, DC.

##### **More Information**

- Anderson, Sarah and Chuck Collins. "What States Can Do to Reduce Poverty and Inequality through Tax Policy." *Inequality.org*. February 22, 2019. <https://inequality.org/great-divide/what-states-can-do-to-reduce-poverty-and-inequality-through-tax-policy/>.
- Choi, Jung, Bhargavi Ganesh, Sarah Stochak, and Bing Bai. *Exploring the Viability of Mansion Tax Approaches*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2018. [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98423/exploring\\_the\\_viability\\_of\\_mansion\\_tax\\_approaches\\_19.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/98423/exploring_the_viability_of_mansion_tax_approaches_19.pdf).
- Leachman, Michael and Samantha Waxman. *State "Mansion" Taxes on Very Expensive Homes*. Washington, DC: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/state-mansion-taxes-on-very-expensive-homes>.

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## FACT SHEET: Immigrant Rights



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-2020*

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#### **S.1401/H.3573: An Act to Promote the Civil Rights and Safety of All Massachusetts Residents (Eldridge - Balser/Miranda) -- Safe Communities Act**

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Although our attention often goes to the tragedy of families being ripped apart on the border, families are also being ripped apart here in Massachusetts.

President Trump has ordered the round-up of all undocumented workers, regardless of their situation, their contribution to society, or their family situation. The law currently allows MA law enforcement to aid in these deportations, which according to many law enforcement officers, decreases the safety of all community members.

Trump's hateful anti-immigrant rhetoric has produced a climate of fear among the undocumented, to the point that some are avoiding sending their children to school or going to the doctor. Moreover, if individuals are afraid that reporting crime to the police could lead to deportation of themselves or their loved ones, then they are not going to do so. Victims of domestic violence are especially at risk, and reporting of domestic violence has fallen since Trump's election amidst such fears.

The involvement of local law enforcement in enforcing immigration law increases the risk of racial profiling. This harms not only the undocumented, but all people of color, who become potential targets because they might "look" undocumented.

Lastly, Massachusetts law enforcement is not being paid to act as ICE agents. Cooperating with Trump's orders costs the Commonwealth money, both from the extra duties and expensive lawsuits over violation of due process.

##### **What does this bill do?**

The Safe Communities Act guarantees basic rights and ensures that state and local law enforcement don't participate in federal immigration enforcement activities. Key parts of the bill include the following:

- (1) Preventing police from inquiring immigration status** unless required law: Many immigrants fear that calling 911 or speaking to police will lead to a family member's detention or deportation, making them more vulnerable to domestic abuse, wage theft, and other crimes.
- (2) Guaranteeing due process:** Detainees must be informed—in a language they understand—that they have the right to decline an interview with ICE agents and to have their own attorney present (at their own expense) if they so choose.
- (3) Limiting notifications to ICE:** Police, court officers, and jail officials can currently notify ICE that someone is about to be released. Limiting such notifications would help ensure that immigration status isn't used as an excuse to keep people behind bars when they're entitled to go free.
- (4) Ending collaboration agreements with ICE:** 287(g) agreements needlessly and harmfully entangle state and county officials with ICE and require them to do work that they are not being paid to do. By shifting detainees into ICE custody before they can go to court, they undermine the basic right of due process. Massachusetts is the only state in New England to have such agreements, and we have four: with Bristol, Barnstable, and Plymouth counties, and the Department of Corrections.

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**More Information**

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- "Massachusetts." New American Economy. 2019. <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/massachusetts/>.
- National Immigration Law Center. "How ICE Uses Local Criminal Justice Systems to Funnel People into the Detention and Deportation System." 2014. <https://www.nilc.org/issues/immigration-enforcement/localjusticeandice/>.
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## FACT SHEET: Criminal Justice Reform



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#### **S.1379/H.2047: An Act to strengthen inmate visitation (Chang-Diaz - Decker)**

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Last year, the Department of Corrections (DOC) passed severe restrictions on the number of individuals who may visit inmates. Every inmate must pick the people who will be allowed to visit them (limited to 8 or 10 depending on the security of the prison they are in) and submit the list to the DOC. The proposed visitors must submit an application and be approved by DOC in order to visit. The prisoner can only change their list of allotted people every four months, and once a visitor is approved, that person may only visit one inmate in the state. There was no rational basis to create such onerous restrictions on inmate visitation, and it goes against all the research on the importance of visitation for everyone involved in the criminal justice system including the public at large.

Visitation is crucial to the well-being of prisoners, their families, and even prison employees. Research has shown that visitation is an effective strategy in rehabilitating and reducing recidivism, which enhances public safety. Prisoners who receive visits have fewer instances of misconduct, which improves the safety within prisons as well. Children of incarcerated parents are less likely to be incarcerated themselves if they visit their incarcerated parents. Visits help prisoners maintain relationships in their outside community, which makes re-entry into the community much more likely to be successful.

Given that visitation enhances public safety, reduces recidivism, and promotes rehabilitation, our prisons and jails should be fostering the maintenance and growth of positive bonds between prisoners and their friends, family, and the broader community—not limiting these relationships.

##### **What does this bill do?**

This bill strengthens and secures the rights of prisoners to receive visits and maintain relationships with their friends and loved ones without unnecessary interference from the state.

It does so by taking the following steps:

- Rolling back limitations that have been placed on the number of unique individuals who are allowed to visit a prisoner and the ability of prisoners to update such a list.
- Ensuring that no visitor is excluded solely because they have volunteered in a prison or jail or because they have been incarcerated in the past (while still allowing for exclusion if there is a reasonable individualized suspicion that they may pose a threat to security).
- Protecting the confidentiality of visits and requiring that the DOC only gather the personal information necessary for the safety and security of the institution.
- Ensuring that prisoners are allowed to have contact visitation wherever that is feasible and that visitation may only be restricted as punishment for a disciplinary offense for up to fifteen days.
- Requiring that dress codes are implemented in a reasonable manner and with respect for visitors' religion, race, class, culture, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- Ensuring that loved ones may see their incarcerated friends and family members if they are transferred to a hospital and in critical condition or in imminent danger of death.
- Encouraging prison and jail administrators to maximize visitation and make it as free and unencumbered as possible, provided it is not inconsistent with a facility's operational and security needs.

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**More Information**

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- Mohr, Gary. *An Overview of Research Findings in the Visitation, Offender Behavior Connection*. Columbus, OH: Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, 2012. <http://web.archive.org/web/20151106090251/http://www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/5101/Mohr%20-%20OH%20DRC%20Visitation%20Research%20Summary.pdf?1352146798>.
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## FACT SHEET: Eviction Sealing



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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## **S.824 / H.3566: An Act Promoting Housing Opportunity and Mobility through Eviction Sealing (Boncore - Moran)**

### Why is this bill important?

Having an eviction record is creating a devastating barrier for tenants looking for housing. Since 1988, over 1 million eviction cases have been filed in Massachusetts. Records are created as soon as a case is filed and are publicly available forever—regardless of the outcome. These records impact people’s ability to obtain housing, credit, and employment, harming many and disproportionately impacting women and people of color. Many cases are decades old, and the information is obsolete.

Regardless of whether one does anything wrong or is actually evicted, being party to an eviction or housing case is being unfairly held against tenants when they try to rent a new place. Even *winning* in court hurts tenants. Eviction records should only be online, publicly available, or reported by a tenant screening company when a landlord wins on the merits or a tenant breaks an agreement and is evicted by a constable. If an eviction case is not the fault of the tenant, is dismissed, or ends with a tenant satisfying an agreement, these records should not be made public—and children should never be harmed by the actions or inaction of adults. It’s time for Massachusetts to seal eviction records, expand housing options, and protect kids.

### What does this bill do?

The HOMES Act would protect tenants from being unfairly branded with an eviction record if they don’t have a judgment against them, if they weren’t actually evicted, or if they didn’t do anything wrong. It also creates a process for eviction sealing—currently, criminal records can be sealed but civil eviction records are always open.

The bill does this by:

- Sealing all eviction cases as soon as they are filed and while they pending, until an allegation is proven.
- Sealing no-fault evictions and certain other cases, e.g., when tenants are seeking to get repairs made.
- Making non-payment and fault eviction cases publicly available when there is a judgment against the tenant on the merits, or there is an agreement for judgment and the tenant has actually been evicted.
- Sealing all eviction records after 3 years and providing a process to seal records for good cause before then.
- Creating a process for parties to correct errors in eviction records.
- Making it illegal for a tenant screening company or landlord to use or report a sealed court record.
- Making it illegal to name minors or others not responsible for the rent as a defendant in an eviction case.

### More Information

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## FACT SHEET: Reproductive Rights



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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#### **S.1209/H.3320: *An Act to remove obstacles and expand abortion access*** (Chandler - Haddad/Livingstone)

##### **Why is this bill important?**

Bodily autonomy is a fundamental human right. And it's at risk. With the appointment of anti-choice Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, President Trump and his allies have the best chance in a generation to end legal abortion. In such a climate, it's important for states like Massachusetts to shore up and expand the protections granted in *Roe vs. Wade*.

##### **What does this bill do?**

The ROE Act would reform our state's abortion laws to guarantee that anyone, regardless of age, income, insurance, or immigration status, can access safe, legal abortion. This bill would put the right to abortion in state law and update medically inaccurate definitions of abortion and pregnancy in state law which currently define the "unborn child" as existing from the moment of implantation.

The bill takes additional steps to *strengthen* and *expand* reproductive rights:

- Removing mandatory parental consent to abortion, which disproportionately impacts low-income teens and teens of color;
- Allowing for abortions after 24 weeks in cases of lethal fetal anomalies, ensuring medical decisions remain between a patient and their doctor;
- Removing a mandatory 24-hour waiting period for abortion care; and
- Establishing safety net coverage for abortion care for people who don't have health insurance.

##### **More Information**

- Diep, Francie. "Here's What It's Like to Argue Before a Judge That You Should Be Able to Get an Abortion Without Telling Your Parents." *Pacific Standard*. September 7, 2018. <https://psmag.com/social-justice/study-on-teens-seeking-abortion-through-judicial-bypass>.
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## FACT SHEET: Election Modernization



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

*more info: [progressivemass.com/legislativeagenda](http://progressivemass.com/legislativeagenda)*

**S.396 / H.685:** *An Act relative to election day registration (Creem-Malia)*

**S.414 / H.719:** *An Act to enact ranked choice voting (Lewis - Vargas/Madaro)*

#### Why are these bills important?

A strong democracy is one in which all citizens have the opportunity and ability to participate and make their voices heard.

In Massachusetts elections, an arbitrary 20-day registration cutoff disenfranchises up to 170,000 potential voters from participating in our elections. Given that the average American moves more than 11 times over the course of their lives, moving near Election Day could lead to disenfranchisement under the current system. Likewise, given the stress of school, work, family, and myriad other commitments, many voters may first start to learn about an election after the registration window has already passed.

Our neighboring states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut have already realized the problems with such a cutoff and adopted **Election Day Registration**. Maine has had EDR since the 1970s, and New Hampshire since the 1990s. And it's a proven success. Election Day Registration leads to an increase in turnout of approximately 5 percent.

When voters get to the ballot box, they can face complicated choices. Our first-past-the-post system forces ordinary voters to weigh whether they can vote for their preferred candidate or whether doing so would lead to a "spoiler effect" that gives a candidate they like less a clearer path to victory. This same dynamic can lead candidates and their supporters to try to force similar candidates out of a race due to a fear of "vote splitting."

Within the current system, the ultimate winner may command less than a majority support, a contradiction of a basic tenet of democracy and a far too common occurrence in Massachusetts elections. We have some of the least competitive elections in the country, and candidates can win with small pluralities and then stay in office for decades. **Ranked Choice Voting** would eliminate these problems by enabling voters to rank the order of their preferences on the ballot and ensuring that whoever wins does so with majority support.

#### What do these bills do?

##### **Election Day Registration (S.396/H.685)**

This bill would eliminate the arbitrary and discriminatory 20-day registration cutoff and enable prospective voters to register or update their registration at their polling place on Election Day or during the early voting period. Polling places would be required to offer registration during the full hours of voting, with exceptions for small towns (Those with fewer than 1,500 people would just be required to offer new registration during the morning and evening rushes). Prospective voters would have to provide proof of residency at the polls, as is required of first-time voters, and local election officials would submit new registration information to the annual register of voters. The law would take full effect in July of 2021.

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### Ranked Choice Voting (S.414/H.719)

This bill would enact ranked choice voting for every state, county, and non-presidential federal (both primary and general) in Massachusetts. Voters would be able to rank candidates in the order of their preference. They would be able to do so for as many candidates as they want: if they want to choose only one (“bullet voting”), they can; if they want to rank all candidates on the ballot in preference order, they can do that, too. Moreover, the Secretary of the Commonwealth would be tasked with making sure that all of our voting machines are equipped to handle RCV tabulations and conducting public education campaigns so that voters go into the polls fully informed when the law takes effect in September of 2022.

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### More Information

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## FACT SHEET: State House Culture



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-2020*

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## **S.1898 / H.3572: An Act promoting equality and respect in the legislature (Rausch - Sabadosa)**

### **Why is this bill important?**

The #MeToo movement shed light on the often-ignored fact that sexual harassment is widespread throughout many institutions and industries. Moreover, according to research, more than 60% of people are aware of abusive conduct in the workplace. The Massachusetts State House is no exception.

Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community all face higher likelihoods of being the targets of workplace harassment. Massachusetts residents deserve a truly representational government, with legislative members and staff representing the full diversity of the Commonwealth. For that to happen, everyone must feel safe and respected at work.

Just as the government should be a model employer, the State House should be a model workplace, setting an example in terms of both rules and norms. As a first step, depoliticizing the investigation of harassment allegations is essential to creating trust in the process and discouraging wrongful conduct.

### **What does this bill do?**

This bill creates an independent 13-member commission to investigate allegations of workplace and sexual harassment. The commission's members would include a sexual assault counselor, a mediator, a social worker with experience in sexual harassment, and a human resources professional with experience in workplace harassment training. The Commission would be tasked with conducting an annual confidential workplace climate survey, producing a corresponding annual report, and developing model policies and training programs. The bill expressly prohibits retaliatory action against anyone who speaks to the commission and ensures that filing a report or complaint with the commission will not prevent a survivor from pursuing other remedies and that both the complainant and the respondent have a right to appeal.

### **More Information**

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## FACT SHEET: Environmental Justice



### PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS *Legislative Agenda 2019-20*

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## S.464 / H.761: An Act relative to environmental justice and toxics reduction in the Commonwealth (Eldridge - DuBois/Miranda)

### Why is this bill important?

Low-income communities, people of color, and residents with limited English proficiency are disproportionately burdened by pollution, suffering from asthma and cardiovascular disease because of environmental triggers like power plant pollution, waste incineration, or exposure to vehicle exhaust from nearby highways. The same communities often lack equal access to the benefits of our environment, like green space, healthy food, and clean energy, and are not meaningfully informed or consulted on governmental processes, such as permitting of industrial facilities, that directly impact their lives.

A right to a clean environment is built into the Massachusetts constitution: “The people shall have the right to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic qualities of their environment” (Article 97). We need to make sure that that right is realized for all.

### What does this bill do?

The Environmental Justice (EJ) Act would align state agencies with state policy commitments to promote equity, such as Executive Order 552 on Environmental Justice, and ensure Massachusetts designs its policies, permits, and programs with an eye toward prosperity for all.

In particular, the bill would do the following:

- Modify the requirements for state agency “environmental impact reports” to include consideration of public health impacts and take into account EJ communities when siting dangerous fossil fuel infrastructure.
- Ensure multi-lingual outreach and consultation when projects undergoing environmental review are proposed in EJ communities.
- Create a Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) bank, which would maintain an inventory of environmentally beneficial projects in EJ communities that may be funded by violators in lieu of paying the penalties required in the settlement of enforcement actions.

### More Information

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## FACT SHEET: Climate Action



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**S.1958/H.2836:** An Act transitioning/re-powering Massachusetts with 100% Renewable Energy (Eldridge / Decker - Garballey)

**H.2810:** An Act to Promote Green Infrastructure and Reduce Carbon Emissions (Benson)

#### Why are these bills important?

As a coastal state, Massachusetts will be hit especially hard by climate change. According to the latest report from the IPCC, we have to start acting fast if we want to avoid climate chaos, slashing global greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050.

Although we have been a leader in energy efficiency, we still get most of our fuel from dirty energy, particularly natural gas. Our current Renewable Portfolio Standard only requires utilities to source 13% of electricity from renewable energy, and this was only modestly increased in the last session.

But there are signs of progress. The clean energy industry has been growing. Massachusetts has the second highest clean energy workforce by percentage of any state, and the size of that workforce has grown by 84% since 2010. We are generating more than 240 times as much solar energy in Massachusetts as we did just 10 years, and offshore wind is set to be a major player.

#### What do these bills bill do?

##### 100% Renewable Energy (S.1958/H.2836)

This bill would accelerate the growth of clean energy and set out clear, enforceable requirements to ensure that Massachusetts stays on track to achieve 100% renewable energy, while ensuring that the displaced workers, low-income communities, and communities of color that have been most impacted by fossil fuel pollution have a seat at the table. It would make Massachusetts the first state in the US to establish such a bold goal.

In particular, the bill does the following:

- Sets a goal of 100% renewable electricity by 2035, and 100% renewable energy economy-wide (including heating and transportation) by 2045.
- Prioritizes models for local and community ownership of renewable energy generation, sources of renewable energy that are located in Massachusetts or elsewhere in New England, and energy efficiency measures.
- Requires the Department of Energy Resources to set interim renewable energy targets and issue regulations to meet those targets.
- Establish an interagency working group to evaluate all state laws and regulations that affect energy consumption and propose changes to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.
- Establish a Clean Energy Workforce Development Fund to support training, education, and job placement assistance for Massachusetts residents to work in the clean energy industry, funded by energy savings from clean energy projects installed on state properties.

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## Carbon Pricing (H.2810)

This bill would establish a direct carbon price on transportation and home heating fuels to fund reinvestment in local green infrastructure projects while providing additional assistance to individuals and employers in the form of rebates.

This bill would:

- Set aside 30% of the proceeds (approximately \$400-600 million annually) for a Green Infrastructure Fund (GIF) to fund local and regional emission-reducing projects, with 40% of this money targeted specifically for low-income communities
- Ensure that all projects funded by the GIF meet Fair Labor Standards.
- Return the remaining 70% of the money to individuals and employers through income-based rebates to prevent any regressive impacts on low- and middle-income residents.

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