



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: 5/12/2020

Candidate: Lisa Arnold

Office Sought: State Representative, 17th Middlesex

Party: Democratic

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OVERVIEW

We view our questionnaire as an educational resource, for both candidates and voters, on progressive approaches to the issues. It provides candidates the opportunity to address a number of important issues beyond the surface talking points, 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.

Each section features charts or graphs (with links to sources) that illustrate one or more facets of the issue under discussion.

We encourage you to expand your answers beyond "yes/no" 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

*Our questionnaire is comprehensive and will take time to complete. Please develop your answers in a separate document before inputting them into the submission form.
(progressivemass.com/questionnaire)*

I. About You

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

LA: As an active community member, I am challenging incumbent David Nangle because we need new leadership to bring honesty, integrity, and accountability back to the office. The demographics of Lowell and Chelmsford have changed, the issues we care about have changed, and our priorities have changed. It's time for a State Representative who recognizes those changes and is willing to act on them.

My top 4 priorities are: 1) fighting climate change, 2) improving public transportation, 3) developing affordable housing, and 4) increasing access to mental health services.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

LA: After being laid off from Cisco Systems on February 26th, I realized that I want to make a difference and have an impact on my community. I had been considering running for office for quite a while, and I knew that now was the right time. I believe that my 24+ years of experience in leadership positions have prepared me to serve as your State Representative. At Cisco, it was my job as Chief of Staff to learn what needed to be done, and then figure out how to do it. I was responsible for a \$1 billion budget at one point, and a growing start-up portfolio at another. I've helped teams manage major transformations to the way they work. I specialize in helping groups make big changes and get things done, and I'm ready to get things done for the 17th Middlesex district.

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

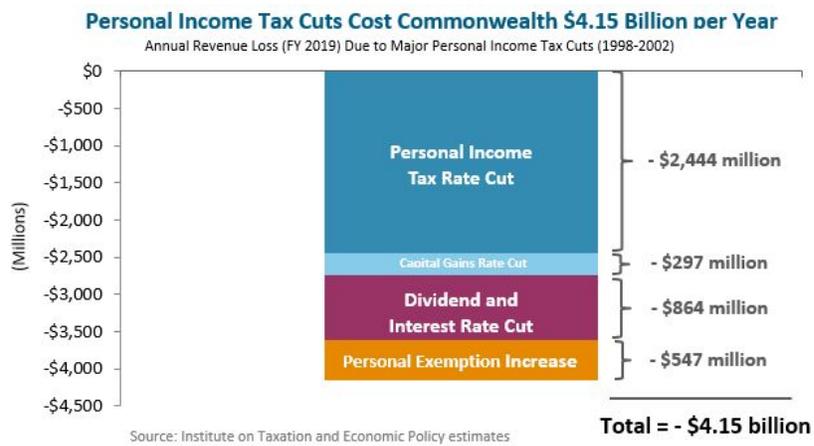
LA: The lack of transparency in government, and not enough progressive legislators willing to stand up and vote for making a difference. Therefore, we need more progressives to run, and to win!

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.



- 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.).**

LA: When the voters of Massachusetts voted for the 5% tax rate over 20 years, they did not anticipate the many changes that would take place over time. This has unfortunately affected the people in the lowest income brackets the hardest, since we've had to make up the shortfalls by increasing sales and excise taxes. This is not sustainable. In order for any company to succeed, they need people who buy their goods and services. If people do not have available income to spend on discretionary goods, then the companies will soon run out of customers. We're getting dangerously close to that point now, and we need to do something to reverse this trend. I have collected signatures for the Fair Share Amendment, and feel that is an important step in the right direction.

- 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?**

- Collecting and publicly disclosing information about the benefits to the state from any tax break?
- Repealing any tax break that does not provide the intended benefits in a cost-effective manner?
- Establishing sunset dates for all tax breaks so that they must come up for periodic review?

LA: It is difficult to get legislation passed quickly and therefore prioritization is required. So, in priority order, I would start with c) establishing sunset dates because I believe this would provide the biggest bang for the effort. Next, I agree with b) the repeal of tax-breaks that do not provide benefit. However, I think a) needs to be tied to b) because you need data in order to justify these decisions. So, first c, and then a+b.

- 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")?**

LA: YES.

I am 100% in support of the Fair Share Amendment and have collected signatures for this effort. I am a bit concerned that the Amendment is so specific. If we put "4%" into the constitution, then it would take yet another amendment to modify that further. After the New Deal, when Federal taxes were the most progressive in U.S. history, the top marginal income tax rates were 91% at one point. I'm not saying they need to be that high, but we might need to make them higher than 4% at times. This seems especially relevant right now, as we will be struggling to recover from this global crisis for many years to come.

- 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?**
 - Raising the corporate minimum tax for larger companies? (The corporate minimum tax is currently only \$456.)
 - Imposing a tax on the portion of corporations' US profits that are shifted to offshore tax havens?
 - Raising the corporate tax rate from 8% to 9.5% (where it stood in 2009)?
 - Raising the tax on long-term capital gains from 5% to 8.95%, in line with states like New York and Vermont?
 - Levying a modest tax on university endowments greater than \$1 billion?

LA: In priority order, my preference would be b & e first. I am aware that a well-known Fortune 500 acquires a lot of overseas companies because they have so much money offshore that cannot be spent in the US, that it is one of the only ways they can spend that money. We need to give them even more incentive to keep that money in the US. Second, a+c. Corporations cannot survive without people who buy their products, but most people can survive without buying most products. Finally, d. Those who can afford to have long-term capital gains can afford to pay in a little more. I would exempt retirement plans from this, however, and maybe add an income threshold. If people are making less than the median income level and have a capital gains tax, that might cause some hardship.

B. Jobs and the Economy

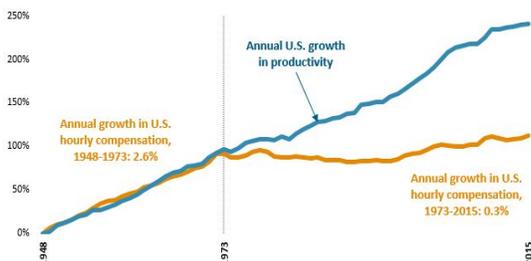
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which 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 as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

LA: Everything is circular. The better we pay our employees, the more money they have to spend. The more money they spend in our local economy, the more tax dollars our municipalities have to invest in improving infrastructure. As municipalities invest in infrastructure, they create more jobs. Those jobs provide income for our residents, and so the cycle continues. We need legislators who are willing to take bold actions to make that first move to jump-start the circle of reviving our economy.

Currently, municipal employees are excluded from the state minimum wage law. Given that the cost of living and taxes are the same whether you work for a city/town or any other entity, it is unreasonable to expect that a person can survive on a lower wage just because they work for the city.

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

LA: YES.

I support one fair wage because as the economy worsens, the first place people cut back is on tipping, and there is no recourse to help those who are then hit hardest. Also, the amount of tips a person can earn varies from restaurant to restaurant, and in lower income communities, the number of high-end restaurants just don't exist, thereby reducing the chance for workers to move up and into higher-tipping restaurants. The system is set up to keep people stagnant in their socio-economic lanes. The current law states that "They must also make at least minimum wage when they combine tips and wages", and I'm not certain how the elimination of the subminimum wage will make a huge or immediate impact. However, the \$8 agricultural worker wage should definitely be raised, as well as removing the exemption of the \$15 minimum wage for municipal workers.

- 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?**

LA: YES.

On the surface, absolutely. However, I would need to learn more about this. I would want to know how often this occurs, what is the recourse today, and how would this be tracked and enforced. Are there any examples that are egregious and obvious, and what has been the response to those? Knowing the data and some real world examples will help to inform the best legislative action.

- 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?**

LA: YES.

The executive exemption is set at \$35k/year which is well below the median salary for Massachusetts, and certainly well below the ability to find suitable housing without a second source of income. Working overtime would make seeking a second source of income extremely difficult, and therefore these workers should be compensated with overtime pay for their efforts. There are other overtime exemptions for non-salaried employees that are also worth reviewing and revising, such as restaurant workers and those who work in hospitals or nursing homes. As we have seen from this pandemic, those workers are considered essential and should be properly compensated for their time.

- 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?

LA: YES.

Many service industry workers must work two (or more) jobs in order to meet the basic cost of living needs. Many others may be working while attending school, or need to plan child care in advance. The right to advance notice and planned schedules is necessary to help the economy thrive. Everything is connected, and as workers are able to schedule around working more than one job, they are earning more disposable income that will be spent on the local economy. Those attending school will be furthering their education so they can advance in their careers, which allows them the opportunity to earn more, which will be spent to boost the local economy. Those who are able to schedule consistent child care will be giving their children a stable environment in which to grow, which will enrich their lives and give them the opportunity for a better future.

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?**

LA: YES.

State and municipal employees seem to have been left out of many of the gains made by unions over the past several years, and it seems their time is coming. There is no reason for their rights to be removed, and in fact, I would support an effort to ensure that state and municipal employees are explicitly and automatically included in any wage laws that are adopted. For example, in the \$15 minimum wage law that we recently fought so hard to pass, municipal employees were excluded from that law. I am not sure how many people who were on the front lines fighting for this are even aware of that exclusion and would certainly have fought to ensure its inclusion.

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?**

LA: YES.

I support arbitration as one method of resolving disputes, but I would oppose the use of provisions that would make it mandatory without alternative recourse. The current legal definition includes the provision that “[i]f one of the litigants refuses to accept the arbitration award, a lawsuit can be filed to have a trial de novo before a court of law.” This provision must remain as a part of the contractual agreement in order to provide necessary protections for employees. One concern I have with arbitration is the lack of accountability. Arbitration could allow a company to violate laws, and continually go through arbitration to settle, thus allowing for the cover-up of a pattern of abuses. I support requiring companies to keep a record of arbitration cases and their outcome, and that record should be made available upon request, should a pattern of abuses begin to emerge.

C. Education

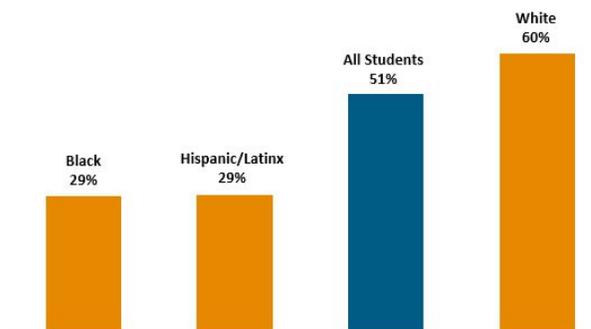
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country. 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

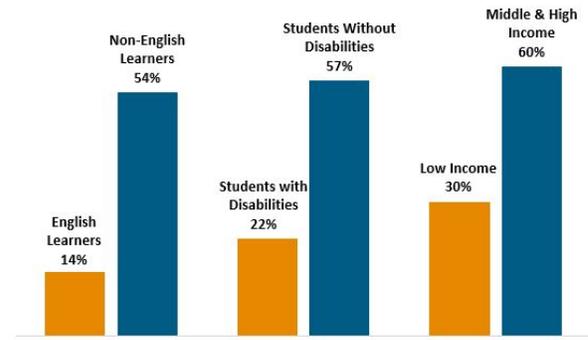
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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

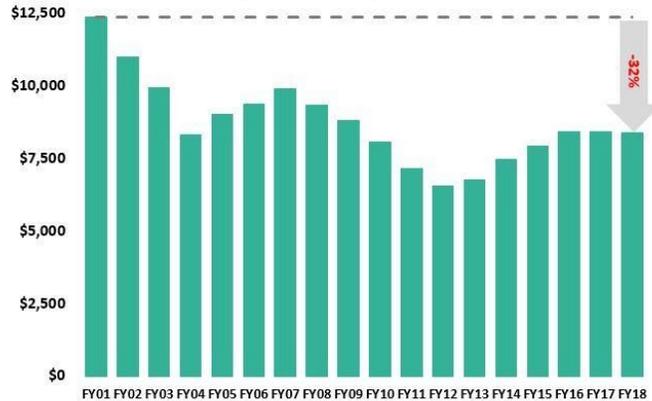


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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.).**

LA: Every student deserves an excellent education regardless of their learning variabilities, economic status, race, or ZIP code. The Student Opportunity Act provides much-needed funding to the Commonwealth’s neediest PreK-12 districts, but we must do more to ensure that every student has access to resources that allow them to thrive. Additionally, Massachusetts’ public universities and colleges, including our community colleges, are severely underfunded. According to the US News and World Report, in 2019, Massachusetts was ranked #1 in Pre-K-12 education, yet only 27th for Higher Education. We must do more to ensure that every student who wants to attend college can do so, and we must ensure that they can do so without incurring debt that will be impossible to pay off during their working careers. Not all careers pay the same, yet most require the same amount of schooling, and they are all equally necessary for a functioning society.

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

LA: YES.

Massachusetts has an achievement gap that starts long before children enter the school system, whether because of income-level, racism, problems in the home, learning disabilities, or being otherwise differently abled. For children that show up to their first day of school already behind, they may never catch up. Studies have shown that the impact on future health and socio-economic outcomes is much greater when children are introduced to a learning environment before the age of 5. It is time we level the playing field and make sure that all children begin school on the same starting line.

- 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. How will you make sure the state follows through with this promise?**

LA: There needs to be transparency and accountability built into the system. The Student Opportunity Act is designed to achieve equitable funding over a 7-year time span. We need oversight to ensure that the balance in funding starts now to take place. If we wait and keep

putting it off until the following year, the gap will only continue to widen. We need to have a well-written year-by-year plan to achieve this over the seven-year time span, with specific, measurable and time-bound goals. Risks to achieving these goals must be identified, and realistic mitigation plans defined ahead of time. The goals should be monitored on a quarterly basis and if the plan is getting off track, then the mitigation steps must be put in place. Change is hard, and the only way to make it happen is to regularly monitor it and make course-corrections where 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.)

LA: YES.

A moratorium on high-stakes testing will only be effective if that time is used to revise the system. The original intent of the testing was for teachers to assess where their students are at the start of the school year so that they could make corrections to their lesson plans and make sure their students get the appropriate level of education to get them back on track and move them forward. The way the system now works, the testing occurs at the end of the year and the results serve only as a means to punish schools that do not meet the standards. We need to get back to the original intent of the tests and use them as a teaching aid, not a punishment.

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.**
- Do you support keeping the cap on charter schools? **YES.**
 - 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.**

LA: I support maintaining the current cap on charter schools. Charter schools must be held to a higher standard of accountability than they currently are. Our tax dollars are being used to fund charter schools, yet those schools do not have local oversight which would hold them accountable to the taxpayers. Charter schools do have a place in our education system, but their role cannot drain funds or resources from the public schools that have an obligation to provide an education to all students, regardless of where they are in their educational journey.

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?**

LA: YES.

There should be a standard curriculum for all schools and it should include medically accurate, age appropriate material. It must also be inclusive of all gender identities and sexual orientations. Most importantly, it must include education around consent and contraception. It is a delicate topic, but the subject of rape must be taught in some form, and male-identifying children must learn their role and responsibility in prevention.

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

LA: YES.

Every young resident of the Commonwealth deserves a quality education no matter their immigration status. They should have the same access to higher education as any other resident.

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

LA: YES.

As a first step, I would support The Cherish Act which would increase student funding for public higher education levels back to that of 2001 levels. The burden of paying for higher education has been shifted onto the students and families just as the need for a higher level of education is required for the majority of new jobs in the Commonwealth. Corporations need better-educated employees in the workforce and our economy needs the burst of spending that comes from young people entering into the workforce. So providing debt-free college would serve both of those objectives. Currently, paying off student debt is tying up billions of dollars that would be better spent injected into our local economy.

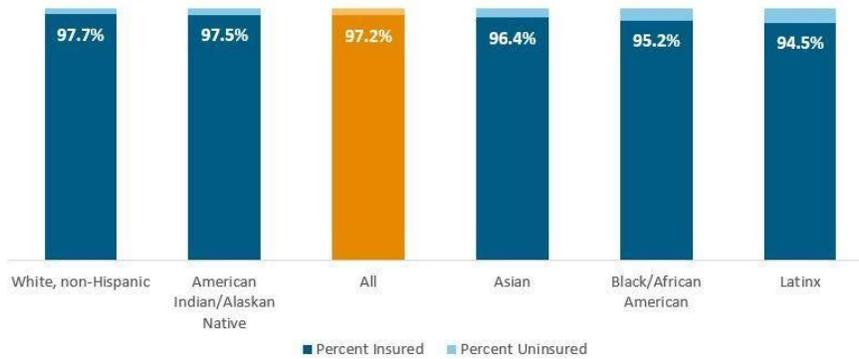
D. Health Care

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

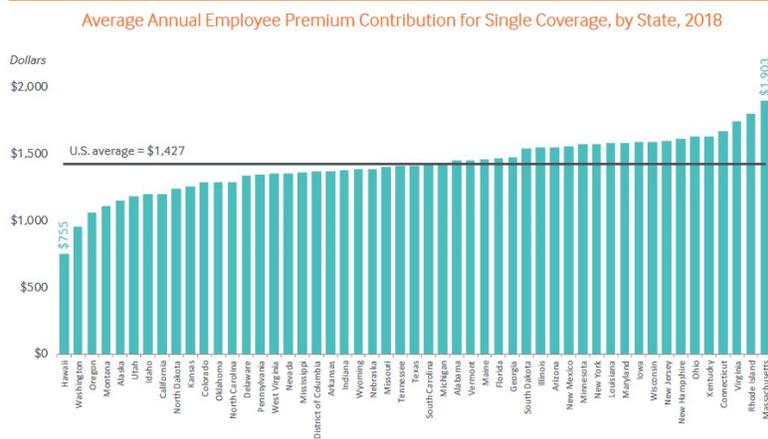
Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.



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.



- 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.).**

LA: I am a strong advocate for Single Payer Healthcare and have participated in rallies, signed ballot petitions, and called my representatives in support of this issue. My personal interests are focused on improving mental health access. I am an advocate for the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I lost both of my sisters to mental illness. Just like people with cancer or kidney failure, people with mental illness deserve our compassion, understanding, and empathy. As state rep, I will advocate for better access to care, reforms to our criminal justice system, and stronger funding for mental health services. I am a member of the Merrimack Valley Project, and am a supporter of the Wheels of Hope program. I strongly advocate for expanding this program into more communities. We need to end the stigma, and change the conversation, language, and dialogue surrounding mental illness and addiction.

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

LA: YES.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 97% of all MA residents were insured. However, since this crisis, the unemployment rate is estimated at 8.6% (as of March 28th), and could go as high as 25% before we are able to get back to normal. Because insurance is tied to employment, that means only 90% of Massachusetts residents are now insured. At a time when going to the doctor's office is beneficial for everyone, having even 1% of the population uninsured is 1% too high. Single payer healthcare would resolve many problems with our current system. I had the misfortune of breaking my knee in Italy and suffering a fall in Germany. Amazingly, the language barrier was the most difficult part of my experiences there. It cost €70 in Italy, and nothing in Germany. I was able to experience first-hand how easy it is to make quality healthcare affordable and accessible.

- 3. Reproductive Rights. In Massachusetts, women under eighteen 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?**

LA: YES.

Whether or not a person should seek an abortion is a reproductive health decision, not a criminal or legal decision and should be treated solely as a medical conversation between the young person and their medical provider. Other decisions of a confidential nature are made all the time between doctor and patient, and this should be no different. This decision has no place in the courts and should be overturned as a part of the ROE Act.

- 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?**

LA: YES.

Addiction is one of many mental illnesses, and needs to be addressed as a public health issue and not a criminal issue. Safe Consumption Sites (SCS) would allow people with addiction to get the support they need with proper medical professionals available to assist them in the event of an overdose, or to provide them with the necessary treatment that they require for their recovery. All too often, people suffering from addiction are not provided with adequate care because they are re-routed through the justice system.

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

LA: The state's response has been too slow, and started at least two weeks too late. We should have had a stay-at-home ORDER rather than an ADVISORY. If we had done more earlier and with more rigor, we might have been able to flatten the curve and get back to normal sooner. So many low-income and minority communities have been hit especially hard and the state should be doing more to assist them. We ignored the homeless community and left them to fend for themselves. With hand-washing the #1 way to protect ourselves and others from the virus, the state should have immediately made provisions for the homeless.

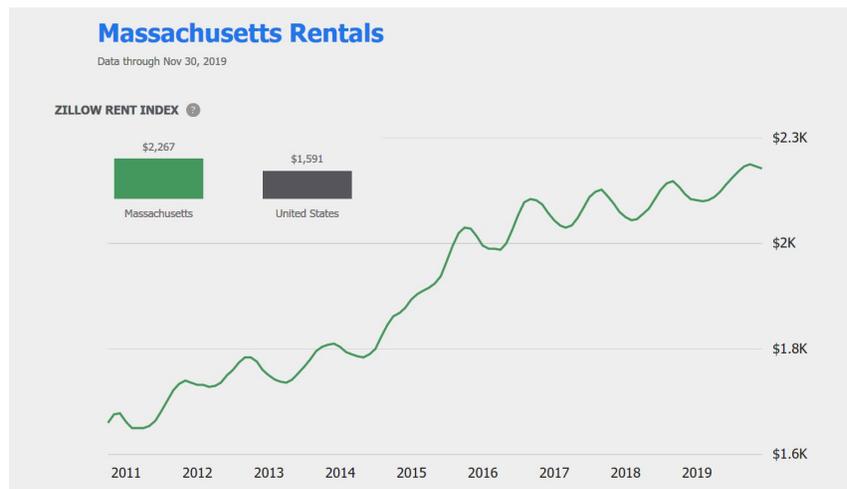
I have posted 3 statements regarding the COVID-19 response:

- * "5 things Lisa would do as your state rep about COVID-19"
- * My thoughts on what's missing from the reopening plan
- * Calling attention to racial disparities as we discuss reopening the state.

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)

- 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.).**

LA: The housing affordability crisis facing Massachusetts is harming people up and down the income scale. Potential homebuyers are unable to find houses they can afford due to low supply, which reduces their choices or drives them into the rental market. Rental costs are spiking, driving tenants from their homes and causing overcrowding in the available low-cost apartments. Low-cost apartments increasingly mean substandard, even dangerous housing, because in today's market some landlords have little incentive to meet responsibilities. Individuals and families at the lower end of the rental market are being driven to homelessness by their inability to find affordable rents.

Massachusetts is facing a housing crisis that is affecting people of all income levels. There is a 30,000 unit shortage of homes and rents are the 3rd highest in the nation. I will fight for better zoning, caps on rent increases, and the development of more affordable housing units.

- 2. Funding. 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?**

LA: YES.

- 3. Tenant Protections. Do 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?

LA: YES.

It costs three times as much to pay for services for someone who has lost their home than it does to help keep a person in their home. Therefore, it is in our best interest to strengthen tenant protections to help people remain in their homes.

4. **Zoning Reform/Housing Production. Do you support requiring cities and towns to allow multifamily housing to be built as of right within 1 mile of transit stations?**

LA: YES.

Requiring cities and towns to build near transit stations would serve two purposes. First, it would help to alleviate the current housing shortage. Second, it would encourage mixed-use development opportunities that would cluster pedestrian activities in close proximity to public transportation, thus reducing reliance on automobile travel. One of the biggest issues with public transportation is that it is not accessible to lower-income neighborhoods, so the people who need it most are least likely to be able to take advantage of it. The Zoning reform would help to mitigate this issue.

5. **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?**

LA: YES.

According to the ACLU, landlords can deny housing to anyone previously named in an eviction notice, regardless of the outcome of the case. So, even if the eviction was filed unlawfully, it will still have a negative effect that can last a lifetime. Additionally, eviction screening disproportionately burdens Black renters by a ratio of 2 to 1. Given that even unlawful filings are still considered grounds to deny housing opportunities, this is a form of legal, systemic racial discrimination. Having evictions sealed after three years would satisfy both the landlords' concerns about wanting reliable tenants, and the tenants' concerns about being shut out of opportunities as a result of circumstances not always under their control.

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.

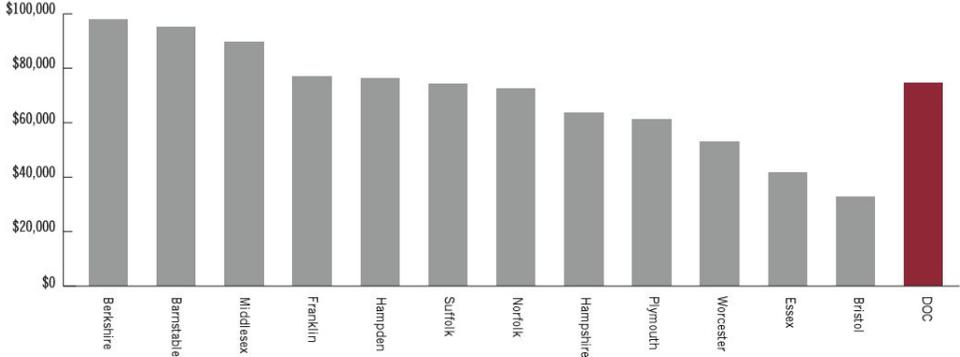
Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts’s population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. As the Trump administration in Washington ramps up a xenophobic mass deportation agenda, it is important for states 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.).**

LA: I believe that all people are created equal and are entitled to the same rights as any other person. It doesn't matter who you love, what color your skin, what gender you are, or if you do not conform to the norms society has dictated, you have a right to feel safe and be treated with respect whether at work, on the street, or at home. I am a founding member of Solidarity Lowell, whose mission is to "work toward social justice by defending the human rights, dignity, and equality of all persons against all forms of hate and discrimination." I served as a member of the Coordinating Committee until recently when I stepped down to run for State Representative. I plan to continue this work in my role in public office.

2. **Police Accountability. Do you support the establishment of an independent review board for police shootings in the Commonwealth?**

LA: YES.

3. **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?
- 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?
- c. Decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adolescents, by creating an exception to the statutory rape law for youth close in age?
- d. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application?

LA: Eliminating mandatory minimums would be my first priority. They do not allow judges to use discretion for individual cases, when in most cases, what the person most needs is treatment and compassion. The 2nd priority is eliminating life without parole, which provides zero incentive to change and can leave those who are incarcerated with a feeling of hopelessness. Another issue to address is the trying of children as adults. Trying children in the juvenile court system would allow them to receive the guidance they need at this age.

4. **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?**

LA: Solitary confinement should be limited to 15 days for all incarcerated people. For those diagnosed with mental health issues, this practice should be prohibited. Instead, they should be placed in secure treatment centers or watch units. People with mental health issues need more socialization, visitation, and services. Placing them in isolation would only serve to worsen their condition and prolong their recovery.

5. **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?**

LA: YES.

6. **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?

LA: YES.

All inmates should be supplied with basic necessities to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Massachusetts, as a state, has purchasing power, and should be required to use that purchasing power to procure the necessary items for each incarcerated person. For additional supplies, the cost should be capped at the average purchase price to procure these items at any store.

7. **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?**

LA: YES.

It is important to keep the lines between state and federal law enforcement separate. All residents should feel safe knowing that if they report a crime, they will not be treated as the criminal. Our state and local law enforcement should not be spending their time, resources, nor our Massachusetts tax dollars doing the job of the federal government.

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

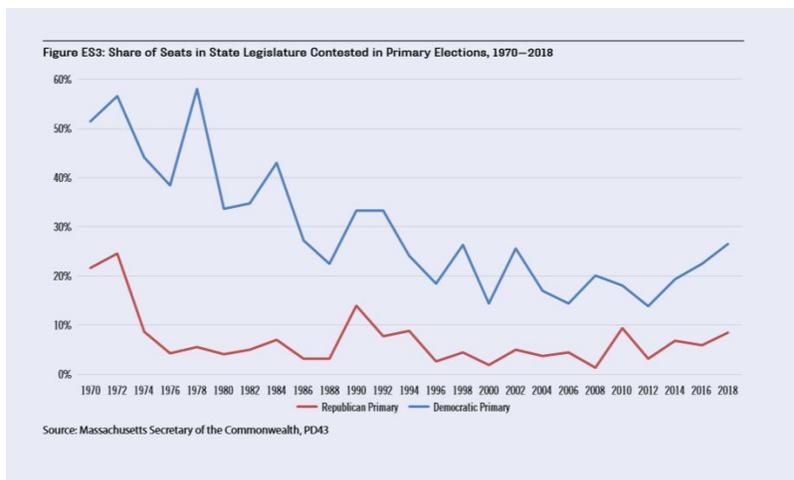
LA: YES.

G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

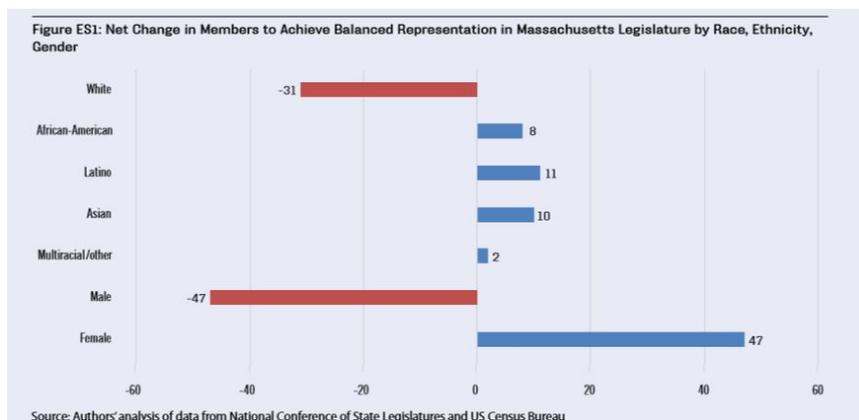
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine the system. Despite recent reforms, a weak public records system stymies government accountability: MA is one of only two states where all three branches of state government claim to be exempt. A strong democracy requires an engaged electorate, but voter turnout in midterm elections, and especially local elections, remains low. Although election modernization legislation in 2014 and 2018 helped bring much-needed reforms, we still lag behind states in New England and around the country in making voting accessible (Maine, for instance, has allowed for Election Day Registration since the 1970s).

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

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



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.).**

LA: I have signed the "Voters Deserve to Know" Pledge. I have worked for the Ranked Choice Voting campaign. I have written to my legislators about Vote-By-Mail and shared the information widely on social media. I believe in a strong democracy, accountable government, and active voter engagement.

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?**

LA: 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?
- b. All written testimony submitted for or against bills?
- c. Reader-friendly summaries of bills currently in or reported out of committee?

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

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?**

LA: YES.

I don't know of an organization that is free of issues with workplace harassment. Given the historical demographics of the legislative body, it stands to reason that workplace harassment likely occurs in the Massachusetts Legislature and that many people may not recognize harassment when they see it because it is not happening to them, or because this is the way it has always been. We need to educate our leaders on what harassment is, and then hold them accountable to investigate and stop it when it occurs.

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?**

LA: 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?**

LA: YES.

Running for office is like a full-time job. While on the job, child care should be covered.

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

a. Election Day Registration?

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

c. No-fault absentee voting?

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

LA: I would further advocate for making the current Vote-By-Mail bill in response to the COVID-19 crisis a permanent law. This could make B and C obsolete.

9. **Ranked Choice Voting.** Do you support the 2020 ballot initiative to adopt ranked choice voting for state, county, and (non-presidential) federal elections?

LA: YES.

Ranked Choice Voting would allow voters to choose their true 1st choice, rather than having to play a guessing game about who they think others will vote for.

10. **Election Integrity.** Do you support requiring **risk-limiting audits** of election results, in which a statistically significant percentage of ballots are hand counted to ensure that the reported winner was the actual winner, preserving the integrity of elections from foreign interference, technological glitches, or simple human error?

LA: YES.

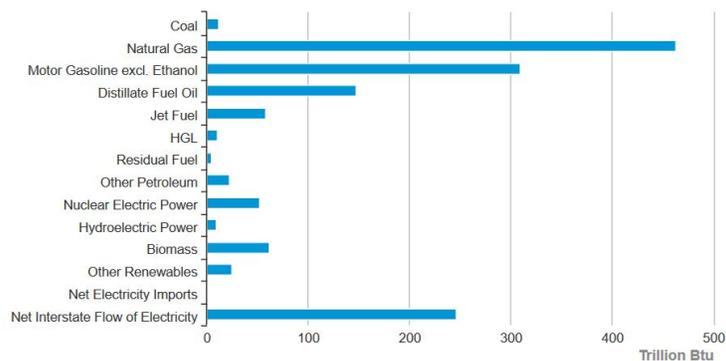
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

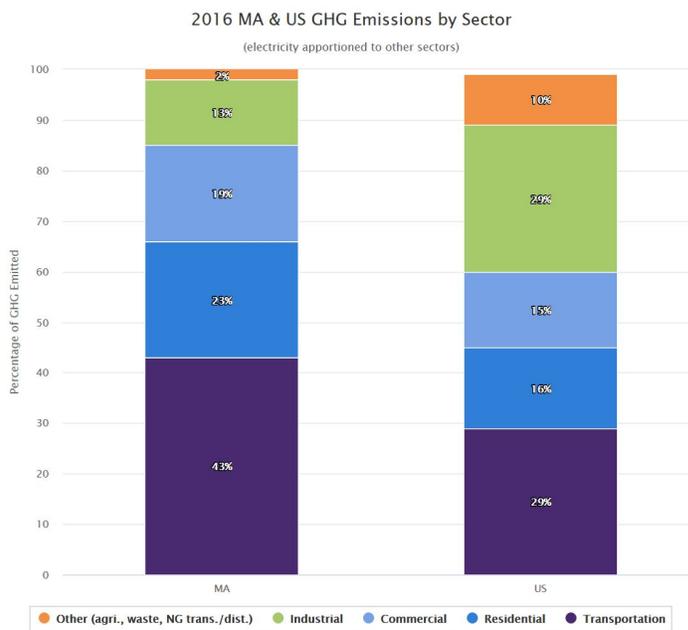
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.).**

LA: Massachusetts residents deserve a transportation system that strengthens our economy and communities. The current system is inefficient, with low-income workers and communities of color bearing the highest burden as costs increase and routes and hours decrease. It must be made more efficient, affordable, reliable, and accessible. I have signed the Massachusetts Green New Deal pledge. We must transition away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy. We need to insist on government investment in green jobs and infrastructure, while addressing the needs of displaced workers.

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

LA: YES.

When Lowell was considering this, I I spoke in favor of the motion, and I am extremely proud that Lowell joined the growing list of cities and towns to adopt this ordinance.

- 3. Solar Energy. Do you support increasing equitable access to solar power by removing caps on solar generation and restoring compensation for low-income and community solar?**

LA: YES.

Failing to extend the cap has forced multiple solar projects to be put on hold. Money and jobs have been left on the table.

4. **Renewable Energy. Do you support a target of 100% renewable energy economy-wide by 2045 and 100% renewable electricity by 2035?**

LA: YES.

The only way to ensure success is to have yearly goals and risk mitigation plans outlined ahead of time and ready for implementation if necessary.

5. **Environmental Justice. Successive gubernatorial administrations have made verbal commitments to environmental justice (EJ), and Governor Deval Patrick issued an Executive Order on Environmental Justice in 2014 which has not been implemented. Would you support efforts to codify EJ into law?**

LA: YES.

Until EJ becomes law, it will be too easy to continue talking about it without making any progress, and the longer we wait, the worse the situation will get.

6. **Fossil Fuel Infrastructure. Do you oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?**

LA: YES.

I would also support requiring gas companies to fix all known leaks within a specific period of time.

7. **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?**

LA: YES.

In the quality systems field, we have a saying: you can't manage what you can't measure. By a monetary value to carbon emissions, it allows us to see the problem, measure it, and manage (or in this case, reduce) it.

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

LA: YES.

We need to invest in the MBTA and improve it beyond current standards. These investments will be paid back as more people utilize public transportation. It will be better for the economy, for the environment, and for tourism.

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?**

LA: 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.

LA: As an advocate for safer bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, I support the pedestrian- and bike-friendly design and development of our roadways. Funding for Safe Routes to Schools and Complete Streets programs should be distributed equitably, ensuring that low-income communities and communities of color have equal access to these funds.