



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: 5/12/2020

Candidate: Michael Kushmerek

Office Sought: State Representative, 3rd Worcester

Party: Democratic

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Kushmerek4Rep/>

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?

MK: I'm running to dedicate myself fully to the people of Fitchburg and Lunenburg. I have shared many of the same struggles as the residents of this region, and I want to speak candidly about the issues we face and work to confront them head on.

I would like to focus on expanding job creation and economic development, bringing critical funding to our aging roads and infrastructure as well as education at every level, from early childhood through our community and state colleges. Education must remain a focus to invest in our future and to keep our commonwealth competitive.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

MK: Having served the residents of Fitchburg on the city council since 2014, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with municipal, state and federal officials on areas and issues that impact our community. I consider myself fortunate to have had mentors such as Representative Stephan Hay and many on the council from whom I have learned.

Constituent services is at the heart of my council experience. Accessibility and visibility have been crucial, listening to constituents and advocating for their issues and concerns, introducing legislation on their behalf, ultimately this approach will help guide my actions as a state representative.

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

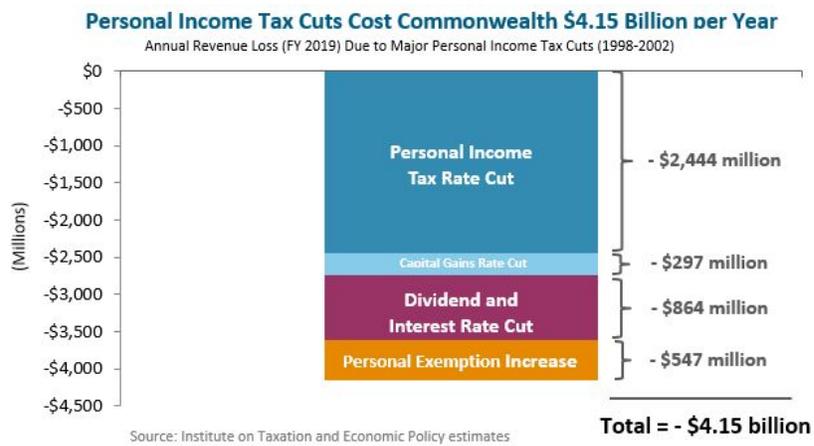
MK: The district that I am running in has shown that it is increasingly "purple" and has recently elected republicans to seats long-held by democrats. While there are many progressive supporters in the district, the vast majority of the district's voters are moderate in their views.

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.).**

MK: I believe that government has responsibility to spend revenue in the most efficient manner that provides the best products and services to taxpayers and residents.

I support the Fair Share Amendment and would work to ensure that the revenue is earmarked towards education and public roads. It is particularly important that those additional funds be in addition to current spending levels, not in replace of existing resources.

2. **Corporate Tax Breaks. Corporate tax breaks cost Massachusetts more than \$1 billion in foregone revenue each year. Companies can secure access to such tax breaks due to political connections whether or not the promised benefits ever materialize. Which of the following accountability steps would you support?**

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

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")?**

MK: YES.

4. **Progressive Revenue.** Massachusetts will not see new revenue from the Fair Share Amendment until 2023, but we have unmet needs now (and will still even with the Fair Share Amendment). Which policies would you support to make a more progressive tax code?
 - a. Raising the corporate minimum tax for larger companies? (The corporate minimum tax is currently only \$456.)
 - b. Imposing a tax on the portion of corporations' US profits that are shifted to offshore tax havens?
 - c. Raising the corporate tax rate from 8% to 9.5% (where it stood in 2009)?
 - d. Raising the tax on long-term capital gains from 5% to 8.95%, in line with states like New York and Vermont?
 - e. Levying a modest tax on university endowments greater than \$1 billion?

MK: Re: (e), many college's endowments primarily fund scholarships, which provides access for students who may otherwise be unable to pursue a degree from private a university. Some colleges allocate large amounts of their endowment to social justice and environmental sustainability, among other areas. Additionally, these kinds of taxes encourage philanthropists to instead place money in donor advised funds, consolidating wealth, not with the individual or institutions, but instead with firms such as State Street or Fidelity. While I support encouraging colleges to spend their money on providing access, this may ultimately harm the progressive agenda and have severely detrimental effects on philanthropic behavior and college accessibility. Re: (c), no, because this would represent the highest tax in New England and NY. I believe that this would enable neighboring states to entice Mass-based companies to move over the border to our neighboring states, siphoning funds and middle-class jobs out of the Mass economy.

B. Jobs and the Economy

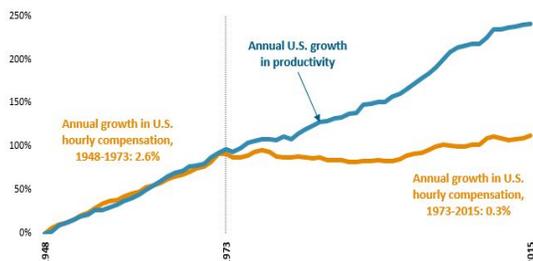
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which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

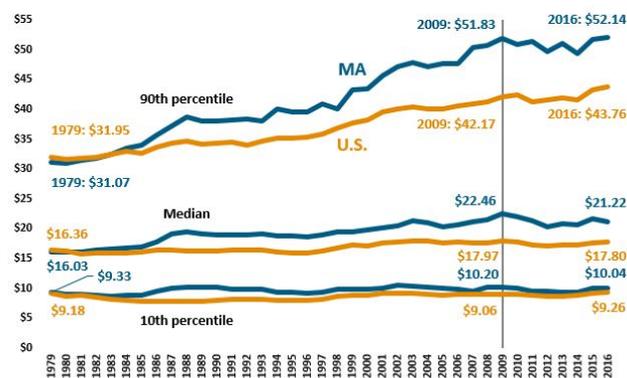


Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Trends data, and the 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.).**

MK: Job growth and creation is essential to a state's long-term success and budget sustainability. That growth, however, must help provide living wages to more of the commonwealth's residents. As we target economic development as a strategic priority, it is crucial that we look to promote workforce diversity and that our workforce is reflective of our population. We must also diversify the commerce of Massachusetts to withstand market fluctuations and recession as well as foster competition within industry.

There will be many questions about income and wages that will come before me should I be fortunate enough to be elected. Many of these efforts will require further research and input from economists and subject matter experts.

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

MK: NO.

Unsure- I remain open to this concept, but need more information about such a proposal, it's effectiveness, and whether servers/tipped employees would ultimately make more or less. I would be concerned about 1. whether service positions would be allowed to receive tips (could restaurants/bars now prohibit their employees from accepting tips?), 2. how would this affect customers' behavior towards tipping (In other countries, tipping no longer occurs/or is fractional once a subminimum wage is eliminated) resulting in less total revenue for servers 3. impact on small businesses and the mechanics of how costs are then redirected to the customer.

- 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?**

MK: YES.

As a city councilor, I have worked with the Carpenters' Union and successfully introduced, passed and implemented a Responsible Employer Ordinance to prohibit the City of Fitchburg from contracting work to any entity convicted of or cited for wage theft. As a state representative I would not only support H.1610, but also use every legislative tool at my disposal to combat and eradicate tax fraud and wage theft that is destroying paths to the middle class.

- 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?**

MK: YES.

- 5. Fair Scheduling. Many workers in the service sector face irregular working hours, making it difficult to plan for other life events. Do you support providing workers the right to 14 days advance notice of hours and the right to request specific hours without retaliation from the employer?**

MK: NO.

Open to the concept, and agree for the need to help works be able to plan for life events, but I am concerned about how this would impact part-time employees. This model could result in a reduction of part-time employees and change hiring practices to hire only individuals who can work set schedules. This could be a positive thing, but the possibility of damaging consequences of part-time employees remains. How would this impact small restaurants,

diners, and bars with five or fewer employees, where the impacts to employee and employer could be significant?

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?

MK: YES.

Collective bargaining units protect and preserve the rights of employees across private and public sectors and play an important role in advancing economic and social mobility. The rights to protect health insurance access and affordability for employees should not be undermined. I would vehemently oppose any movement to move towards a right to work state and I would stand by workers to defend their right to unionize.

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?

MK: YES.

C. Education

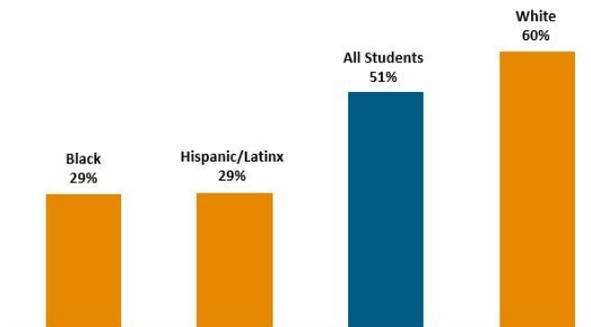
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country.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

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

Massachusetts has significant achievement gaps reflective of resource gaps.

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

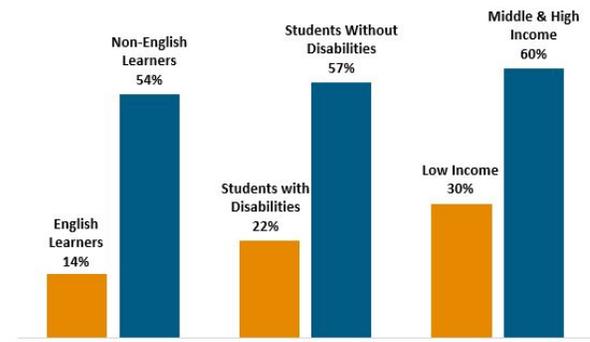
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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

Share of Mass. 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Category

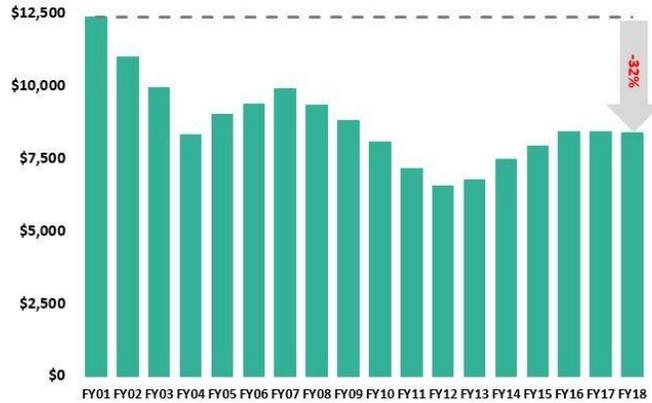


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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

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

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



Note: FY 2007 total is adjusted downwards to account for the fact that significant funding during this year was for capital investments that supported activity during other fiscal years.

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

MK: Without planning for the future now, which means not just maintaining but also expanding educational programs and opportunities, the next generation of Massachusetts citizens won't have the same opportunities I had as I moved through our public education system. Massachusetts needs to maintain its competitive edge nationally and globally and I believe that starts with a strong educational base supported by state level investments and policies. It also means providing equal opportunity and adequate funding to urban and gateway communities to close achievement gaps.

Massachusetts needs to invest in post-secondary education and other opportunities for our high school graduates. The majority of our High School students enroll in public education institutions in-state, and the majority of those graduates will stay in-state when they join the workforce. These students are our labor force, they fuel innovation, and they drive entrepreneurship, and this is what builds our economy. However, per student State spending on education is lower today than it was in 2001.

- Better fund higher education and commit to long-term funding to ensure a strong system and a healthy pipeline of leading talent in Massachusetts
- Work to reduce or eliminate student debt that diminishes the economic strength and vitality of our region
- Build support for college alternatives as well – trades and career readiness programs are important and viable options

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

MK: YES.

The pre-k system is long been underfunded and long-ignored. Childcare and pre-K is as essential to the economic infrastructure as our roads and bridges and is foundational to our economy, the education system, our families and addressing the gender pay gap.

- 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?

MK: This will be a top priority to ensure, using every legislative resource available, that the state follows through on its \$1.5 billion commitment, but also continue to advocate for additional funding and ensure that funding gaps are closed.

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.)

MK: YES.

5. **Charter Schools.** In 2016, MA voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools given the millions of dollars it would have siphoned away from public school districts.

- a. Do you support keeping the cap on charter schools? **YES.**
- b. Would you support legislation to bring greater accountability to charter schools by requiring them to adhere to the same disclosure and disciplinary standards as public school districts? **YES.**

MK: Simply put, the funding would be far more impactful to closing achievement gaps if it were allocated back to the public school systems and not siphoned away to charter schools that have little accountability for their performance.

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?

MK: YES.

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

MK: YES.

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

MK: YES.

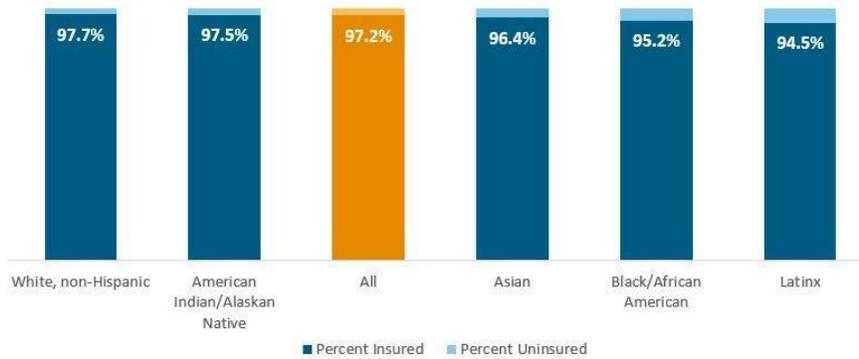
D. Health Care

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with [97% of the state](#) having health insurance. But until that is 100%, we haven't reached truly universal coverage or tackled critical barriers to accessing care. Disparities in insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and high deductibles mean that many do not get the health care they need -- or suffer from long-lasting debt if they do. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

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

Barriers to health insurance coverage remain for some

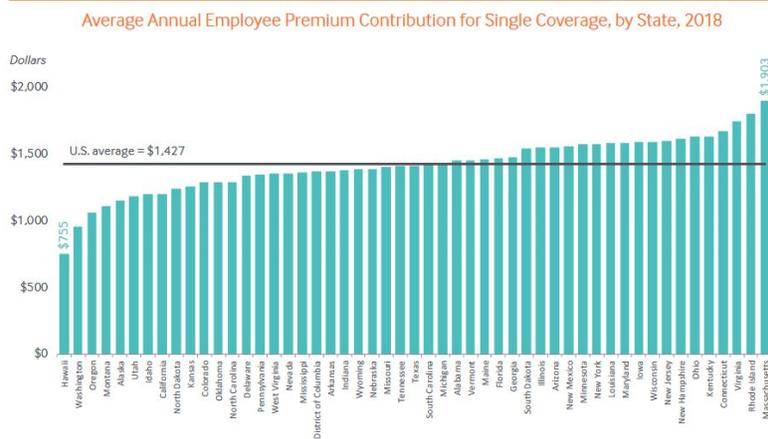
Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.



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

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

MA has the highest health insurance premiums in the US.



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

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

MK: I strongly support pursuing a single payer health care system. There are ample examples throughout the world of healthcare systems that work, and further examination of such systems reveal how much work remains to be done in the US. The US spends more on healthcare per capita than any other country in the world, yet we have less access to healthcare than most in the first world. Regardless of what actions are taken at the federal level concerning the ACA, Massachusetts must continue to offer health care for all.

Of equally crucial importance is protecting women's reproductive rights and ensuring affordable access to contraception.

I have worked with the MNA for years, fighting essential service closures, staffing cuts to hospitals and unfair nurse-patient limits. In the past two years, I have successfully introduced and passed two resolutions in the Fitchburg City Council to stand with the MNA against cuts and closures.

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

MK: YES.

- 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?**

MK: YES.

- 4. Harm Reduction. An essential part of addressing the opioid crisis, safe consumption sites allow medical professionals to respond to overdoses and engage participants in medical and behavioral health services. Would you support the legalization of SCSs?**

MK: NO.

While I agree that there is a massive need for additional medical and behavioral health services to those struggling with opioid addictions, I question the efficacy of safe consumption sites. There are no long term studies to show the impact on communities that host such facilities and I would want more data around effectiveness of these facilities as it pertains to addiction intervention. More data and information is needed before this question can be answered.

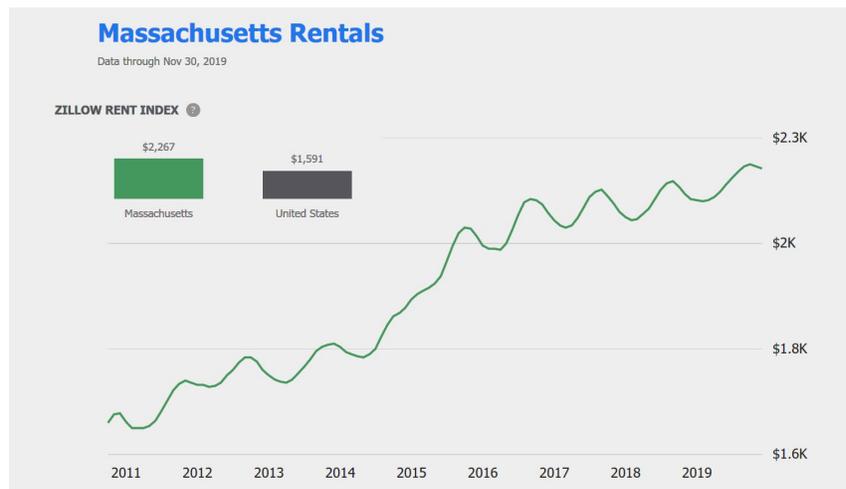
- 5. Pandemic Response. How would you evaluate the state's response to the Covid-19 pandemic?**

MK: While I believe that the initial response was strong, I feel that there are a number of populations, particularly those most vulnerable among us, who we neglected. The elderly, homeless, and mentally ill have been disproportionately affected and the response and aid to these communities has been negligent at best. Additionally, hospital facilities were closed across the commonwealth, using COVID-19 as an excuse to shutter essential services, and bypassing required notice to the state and key stakeholders. Despite reported profits and earnings in recent years, hospital systems used this situation to furlough and layoff nurses across the commonwealth.

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.).**

MK: We have an obligation to all residents- housing is a fundamental human right. We must supply housing that gives opportunity for individuals to be self-sustaining, with access to public transportation in communities that offer employment opportunities. Public transportation needs to be made accessible in all areas not just urban districts.

In order to tackle homelessness, we must not just look to housing departments, but rather look holistically at the issue. Mental health and substance abuse are prevalent issues in the homeless population. Holistic programs that address jobless, homelessness, mental health such as Gardner's GAMMHA Inc. offers us a blueprint for success.

- 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?**

MK: YES.

I would support a city or town's right to choose whether to impose such a fee, with a maximum set by the state. I agree that local exemptions would need to be permitted.

- 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?

MK: YES.

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?**

MK: NO.

I support efforts to ensure that affordable housing is readily available in all cities or towns, particularly those municipalities in the greater Boston area. I don't know that this one size fits all approach works for gateway communities such as Fitchburg where the transit corridor already overwhelmingly consists of multifamily dwellings and/or affordable housing.

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?**

MK: YES.

I support this effort to destigmatize those who rent and must go to housing court, but question if three years is the appropriate term to be placed on such legislation.

F. Racial and Social Justice

Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds.

Mass incarceration in Massachusetts has proven socially and economically destructive, breaking apart communities across the state. From 2011 to 2016, [spending on prisons](#) grew faster than any other part of the Massachusetts budget, while funding for necessary services languished. The average cost per year to house an inmate in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections is [more than \\$60,000](#), money that could be better reinvested into the communities that have suffered from decades of misguided and racially discriminatory “tough on crime” policies. To achieve “justice for all,” we need a judicial system that does not disproportionately target communities of color and the poor and that does not criminalize public health issues such as addiction. The April 2018 criminal justice reform bill made strides forward, but there is more work to do.

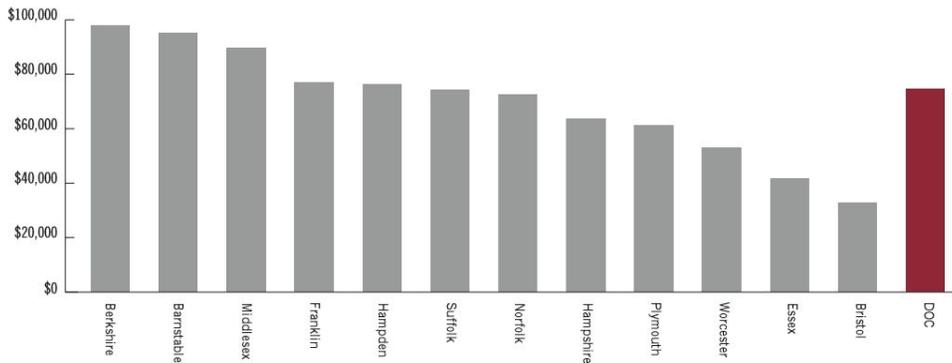
Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts’s population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. As the Trump administration in Washington ramps up a xenophobic mass deportation agenda, it is important for states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

Significant racial disparities exist in incarceration in Massachusetts.

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

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

Figure 4: Estimated expenditure per inmate, FY 2019



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

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

MK: As a commonwealth, we must create an environment that is welcoming and accepting of all. The justice system is not exempt from this and we must work diligently to address mass incarceration rates, particularly for non-violent offenders. Our prison system must endeavor to lower recidivism rates through education, re-entry, and substance abuse treatment programs.

With a significant disparity by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, we must address this issue head-on. From closing education achievement gaps to improving public health services in urban environments, our communities, local and state governments should work in concert to reverse this disturbing reality. Fostering opportunity and equality across the board is the key to addressing disparities.

I have had the honor to advocate for and support the expansion of our Human rights commission, to ensure that our city's employees and commissions are reflective of our residents, and have worked to craft, introduce and unanimously pass a resolution against hate, indifference, and racism in our community.

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

MK: NO.

While I wholeheartedly agree with the intent of the question, I believe that the issue is more complex than a review board. I believe that we need to bring the public safety community together with social and racial justice advocates to talk about this issue and resolve disparities in shootings.

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?

MK: As the question states, the concern is not with the sentence, it's with the application. We need to fix the issues of systemic racism in our judicial system.

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?**

MK: YES.

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?**

MK: YES.

I favor ending these restrictions and working with our partners in corrections to determine the appropriate number of visitors.

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?**

MK: YES.

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?**

MK: NO.

While I support the core tenants of safe communities, and agree that state and federal resources should NOT be conducting deportation raids, I do not agree with the current language of the Act. I feel strongly that cities and towns should be given the authority to declare sanctuary status.

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

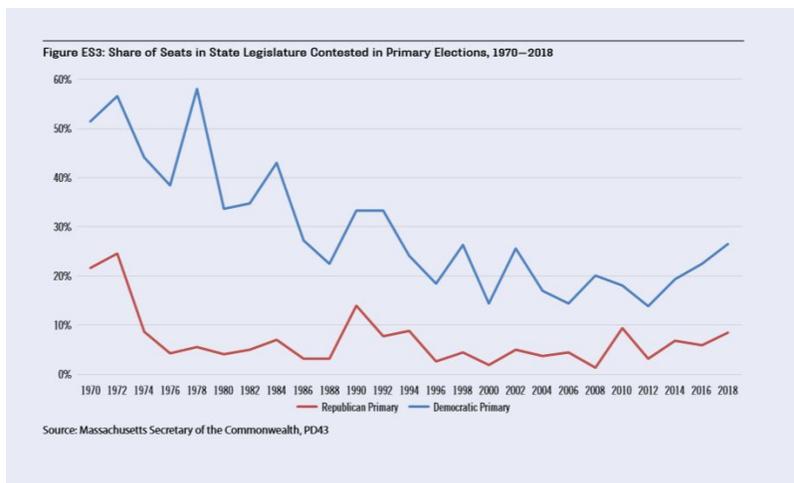
MK: YES.

G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

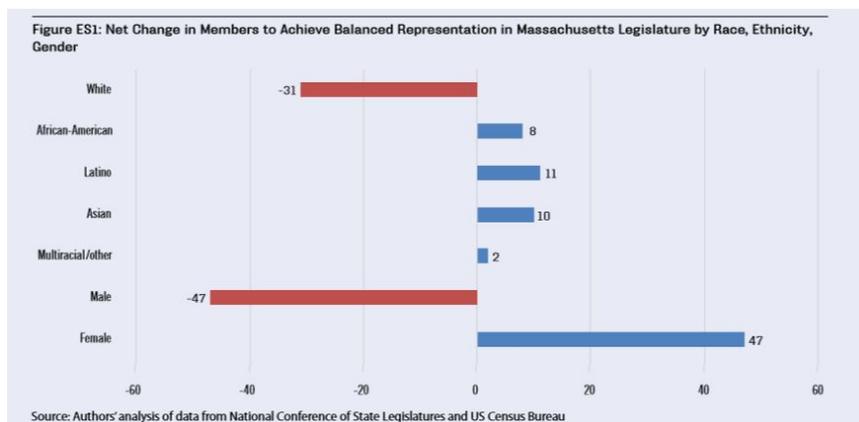
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine 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.).**

MK: I feel strongly that corporate funding of political campaigns undermines the strength of our democracy. A proponent of McCain-Feingold legislation, I have been disturbed by the lasting and pervasive impact of the US Supreme Court's ruling of Citizens United.

Auto voter registration is an initiative that I would strongly support. Many nations in the first world boast voter turn-out in the 70-90 percent range. To ensure a strong and vibrant democracy with a government that is reflective and responsive to the will of the people, we must first have voters participate in the democratic process. To do this, we must remove the barriers to voting and registration to make it easy and inclusive for all.

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?**

MK: 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?**

MK: YES.

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

MK: 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?**

MK: YES.

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)?

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

MK: YES.

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?

MK: YES.

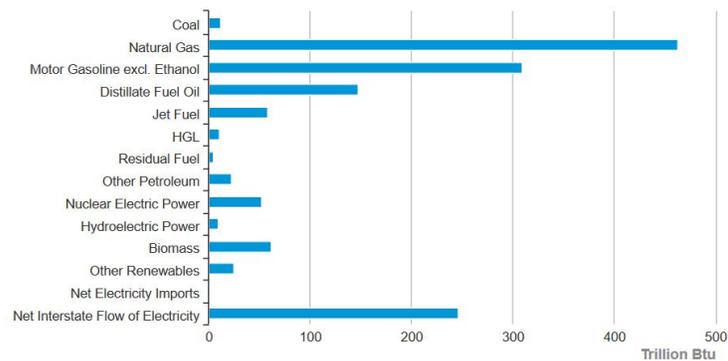
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

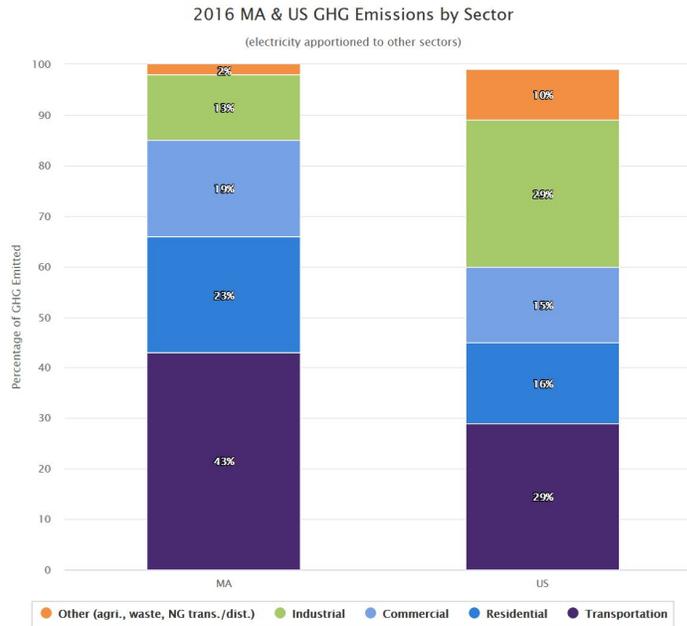
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.).**

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

MK: YES.

- 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?**

MK: YES.

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

MK: YES.

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?

MK: YES.

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

MK: YES.

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?

MK: YES.

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?

MK: NO.

While I favor affordable access to public transportation, and feel that there is more we can do to ensure affordability for those who need it the most, I also believe that our transportation system needs to be more accessible and reliable. We live in one of the most populated hubs of the country, yet our infrastructure is failing, and our public transportation is anemic. I want Massachusetts to boast the most robust public transportation system in the country with state-of-the-art rail and buses. This demands that massive investment must be made both through the budget and by the end user.

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?

MK: 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.

MK: Growing up as the youngest of five, I witnessed my parents struggle to provide for their family, and often rely on programs ranging from welfare, to food stamps, the food bank to fuel assistance to keep a family unit intact and provide the opportunity for their children to make a better future for ourselves. Lost in the rhetoric and myths of fraud is the inescapable reality that hardworking residents of the commonwealth have tremendous need. Behind each of these programs is a success...and an investment in the future.

Today, that experience has been a driving force in my life. I'm running to ensure economic mobility for hardworking families that deserve the opportunity to succeed, to provide a robust economy for residents to live, work, and invest in their communities, and the promise of a properly funded education for future generations.