



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS  
2020 LEGISLATIVE  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Date:** 5/10/2020

**Candidate:** Samuel Biagetti

**Office Sought:** State Representative, 5th Worcester

**Party:** Democratic

**Website:** [www.samforcentralmass.com](http://www.samforcentralmass.com)

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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](http://progressivemass.com/questionnaire))*

## **I. About You**

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

**SB:** I moved to rural central Massachusetts after living in New York City for graduate school, and living in a small town has massively changed my life for the better. Closeness to nature, to history, and to face-to-face local communities form an irreplaceable way of life that many people cannot live without. I also know, however, the struggle of small towns and cities to keep precarious local businesses, state services, and younger people. The way of life that small and rural towns offer needs fair support through crucial infrastructure like rural town-to-town public transit; rural healthcare; and adequate school funding. This is only going to become more crucial due to the current pandemic. As of now, my district in central Mass. sends to the State House a conservative Republican as a sort of default, and he does little to nothing to advocate for our interests, rarely even appearing at the State House. Although I may not fit the expected profile of a candidate for this area, I know that I would give all my energy and passion to bringing strong and just state support to our towns.

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

**SB:** I have a Phd in early American history from Columbia, and have been teaching history as an adjunct for four years. I am also a small businessperson, running an antique dealership based in central Massachusetts. I have brought my skills in communication, writing, and organization into political activism, helping to lead the successful fight against re-zoning bills that would have brought waves of gentrification and displacement to working-class neighborhoods in northern Manhattan, as well as to the movement to stop unlimited money in politics in Massachusetts, and to the revival of the Democratic Party in my town and in rural central Mass. more broadly as a member of the North Brookfield Democratic Town Committee. In my academic studies, business, and political activism, I have gained an understanding of the needs of local communities and institutions, and I know that I can be a the strong advocate that rural towns and working people urgently need in the State House.

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

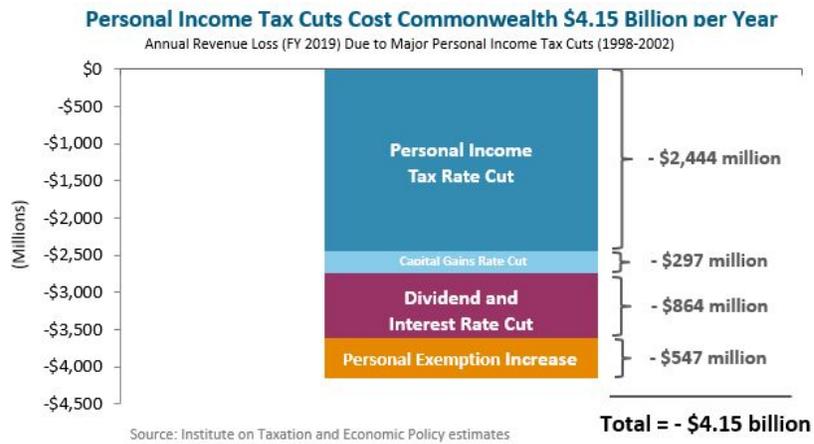
**SB:** Massachusetts is often viewed superficially as an exceedingly "liberal state." This makes it easy for many civic-minded citizens to pay little attention to what actually goes on in the State House, thinking that political problems only lie elsewhere in the country. The legislature, in turn, takes advantage of this; the party leadership on Beacon Hill is exceptionally powerful, with the agenda often being set outside of public view, and bills either passing or dying due to closed-door decisions, unrecorded committee decisions to shelve bills, and rushed "voice votes" on the House and Senate floor. Even when popular or important legislation is on the docket, the public usually is not informed about hearings or votes before the last minute, making public input practically impossible. The entire legislative process must be opened up, with clear public reporting, ample time for public feedback, and votes on the record, in order to public needs and sentiments to have any power over legislation.

## II. The Issues

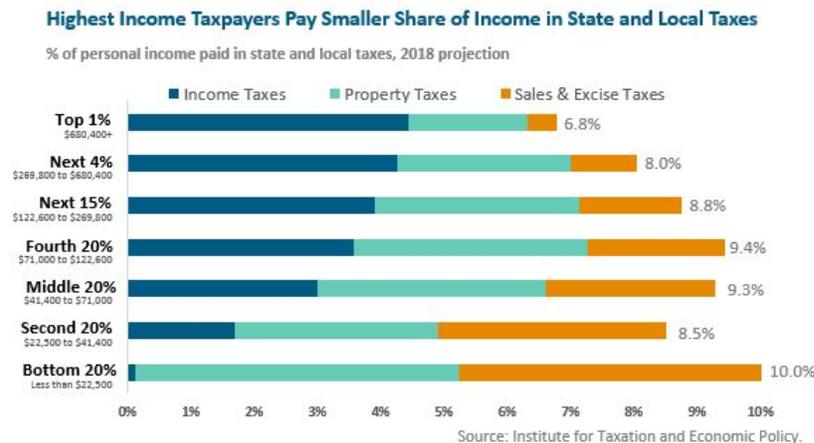
### A. Revenue and Taxation

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.).**

**SB:** Massachusetts has an abundance of wealthy corporations, universities, and residents, including more than 30 billionaires -- yet the main burden of supporting vital public services like our schools falls upon property-tax payers, many of whom are working families or seniors on fixed incomes. This is unfair, regressive, and stifling to working-class and rural towns. Considering that property tax is already a kind of wealth tax, but one that happens to fall heavily on people of limited means, I support creating a fair and comprehensive state wealth tax, which could tax large corporate and personal fortunes at a reasonable rate to support schools and other critical services.

- 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?
- 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")?**

**SB:** 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?
  - 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?

**SB:** I would support a payroll tax on the largest corporations and non-profits that benefit from the highly-educated workforce in Mass.

## B. Jobs and the Economy

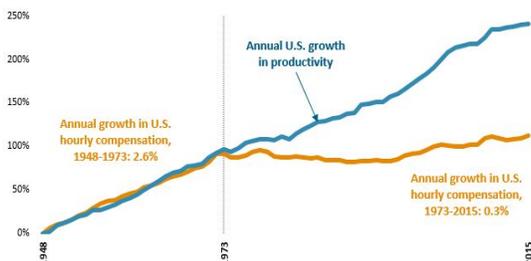
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which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

**SB:** Among states, Massachusetts has a high concentration of good-paying white-collar jobs in tech, academia, and other industries, but they are super-concentrated in the immediate Boston area and the Rt. 128 corridor. This leads to outrageous rents and prices in the Boston metro area, while small business and Main Streets stagnate in outlying towns and small cities. This situation is bad for everyone except for Boston-area landlords. The state should concentrate on building up small industry and new businesses in the rest of the state through improved schools, dependable and convenient mass transit, and universal basic infrastructure that enterprises need, such as high-speed internet in every town. In addition, the state should adopt laws encouraging town-owned or cooperative enterprises, and should look into the creation of a state bank (such as already exists in South Dakota) to move investment into capital-starved new enterprises.

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

**SB:** YES.

In addition to applying the same minimum wage for tipped workers, I support mandating hazard pay for food-service, transit, and other essential workers that are needed in emergencies.

- 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?**

**SB:** YES.

- 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?**

**SB:** 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?**

**SB:** YES.

- 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?**

**SB:** YES.

The ability of workers to unionize when they choose to do so must also be supported in the private sector, where good-paying unionized jobs are at a lower level than in the public sector.

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?

**SB:** YES.

### C. Education

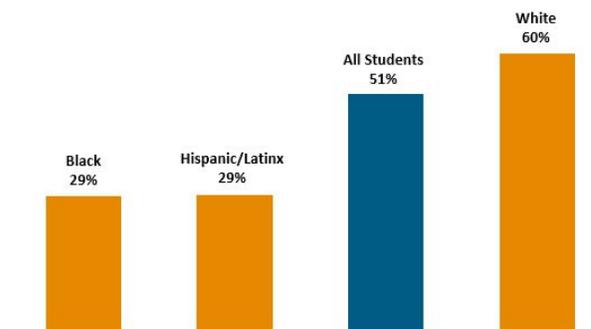
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country.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

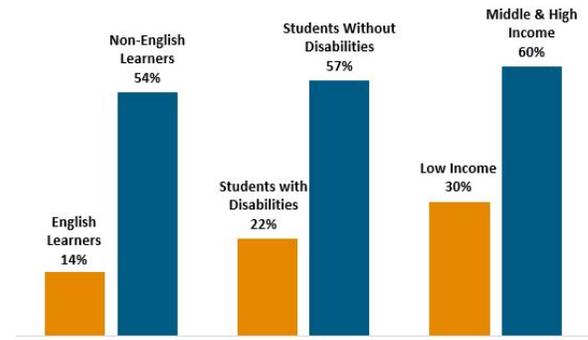
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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

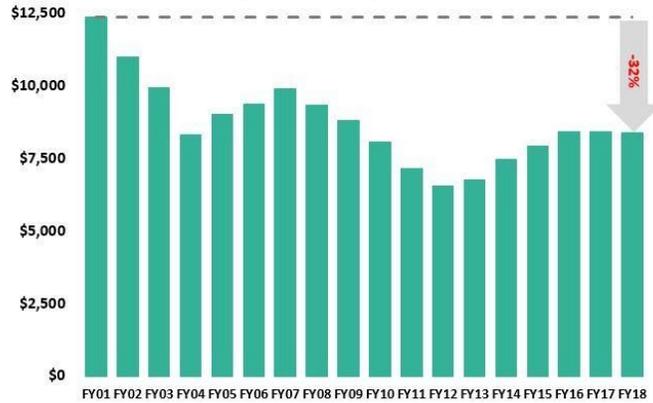


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

#### 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.).**

**SB:** Small towns and working-class neighborhoods should be relieved of the heavy burden of funding schools (and paying for unfunded state mandates) through local property taxes. The commonwealth must create a statewide fund based on equitable wealth taxes or other taxes upon the big businesses that benefit most from the highly-educated workforce that our schools produce. The revenue from this fund should be disbursed to school districts based upon their actual needs and expenses, including the added costs of transit and maintenance for smaller rural schools and the particular needs of working-class communities.

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

**SB:** YES.

- 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?**

**SB:** Propose a budget amendment that until the additional investment is added to the education budget, the money will instead be cut out of the four wealthiest school districts in the state and redistributed.

- 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.)**

**SB:** 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.**

- 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.**

**SB:** Charter schools such as Old Strubridge Academy serve to drain much-needed resources from rural schools in surrounding areas.

Considering that charter schools are able to operate with greater independence than ordinary public schools, the disclosure and accountability standards should be higher.

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?**

**SB:** YES.

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

**SB:** NO.

I support comprehensive immigration reform providing a pathway enabling those who are undocumented to obtain legal status. In the meantime, in-state status should apply to those who came to the country as children and would have been eligible for DACA status.

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

**SB:** YES.

Many public colleges and universities around the country were previously free or nearly-free; we must return to that arrangement in Massachusetts. Hard work and study ought to be the requirement to earn a college degree, not money.

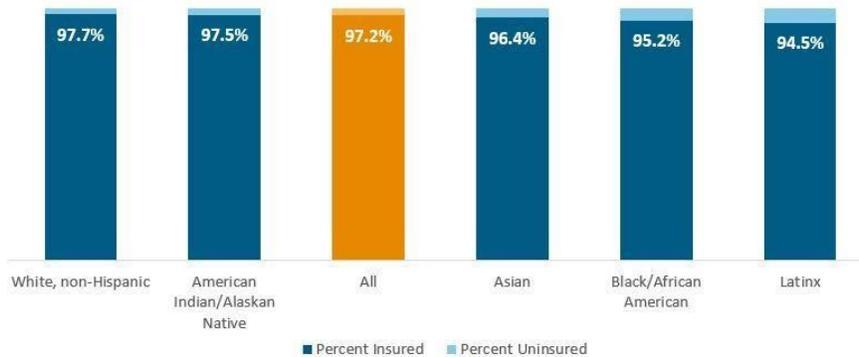
## D. Health Care

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

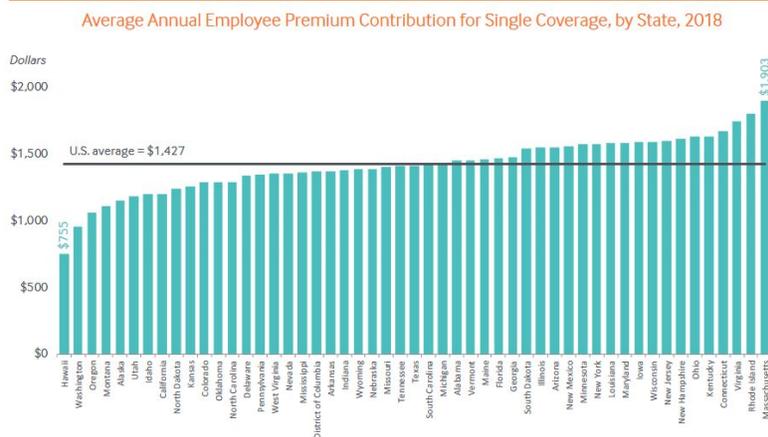
Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.



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.).**

**SB:** This country, including Massachusetts, has seen its healthcare capacity slashed over the past 50 years, losing hospitals and beds even as the population grows. This loss has been especially catastrophic in rural areas, allowing crises such as those in mental health and addiction to mushroom out of control. The strain on our hospitals and lack of adequate PPE in the current pandemic is just the latest example. Expensive drugs or technology cannot substitute for professional, experienced care from nurses and doctors who know their patients and communities. The pattern must be reversed; the commonwealth must start a campaign to open or re-open much needed hospitals and rural clinics, with well-trained nurses and doctors. I wrote about this urgent need in the recent, May 9th, issue of the Spencer New-Leader (p. A8-9) --  
<http://linpub.blob.core.windows.net/pdf/2/4d063bde-18af-4aba-91cb-160ecd2a8814.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ATK3vqS325MkMOeYQCvI27OGA9fyNh4WCqJUOuQBcB5mx1iR1RIMOt64>

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

**SB:** YES.

A single-payer system on the model of Medicare is clearly the way to get past the wasteful bureaucracy and private profit-skimming of the health insurance system. Even more importantly, it would relieve both small businesses and small towns of the tremendous burden of providing health insurance to employees.

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?**

**SB:** YES.

Many minors who seek an abortion are victims of abuse and it can be dangerous to force them to submit their decisions to their parents.

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?**

**SB:** YES.

The opioid addiction crisis began as a medical problem and should be treated primarily as a medical problem.

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

**SB:** I will copy here my letter to the Spencer New-Leader, published in the May 9th issue:

During this pandemic, all of us in rural central Massachusetts are grateful to our essential workers, from nurses and doctors to grocery staff. However, the medical personnel protecting us are forced to work long back-to-back shifts without enough personal protective equipment to contain the virus, nor temporary housing to avoid passing the illness to their families. At U-Mass Memorial Hospital, nurses reportedly must use a single unclean mask for several shifts

in a row, which under normal circumstances would have been punished as negligence. Baystate Health in Springfield was forced into a bidding war just to obtain a shipment of masks, which barely escaped confiscation by the FBI and Homeland Security.

Although Massachusetts has the most advanced biomedical industries in America, the state has done practically nothing to mobilize those capacities to handle the pandemic. Some businesses have contributed -- FlexCon in Spencer shifted to making medical masks, producing enough to supply many of them to hospitals for free -- but other firms have refused to do their part, such as GE, which closed its plant in Lynn rather than switch to producing ventilators.

We were unprepared for this crisis due to decades of negligence by both business and government. Healthcare, especially in rural America, has been decimated, with vital facilities closed and essential services slashed as "waste." In 1960, the country had 9.2 hospital beds per thousand people (about 108 for a town the size of Spencer), but by 2013 there were only 2.9 per thousand. In our own area, Worcester City Hospital--once our nearest hospital--closed in 1991. Mental healthcare has perhaps suffered the most (in central Mass., both Worcester State Hospital and Monson Developmental Center closed in 2012), allowing the crises in mental illness and addiction to mushroom out of control, but all across the board, workers and facilities were already over-strained even before this pandemic. Additionally, vital industries that supply our needs have been shut down, such that we are dependent on imports from China for essential supplies.

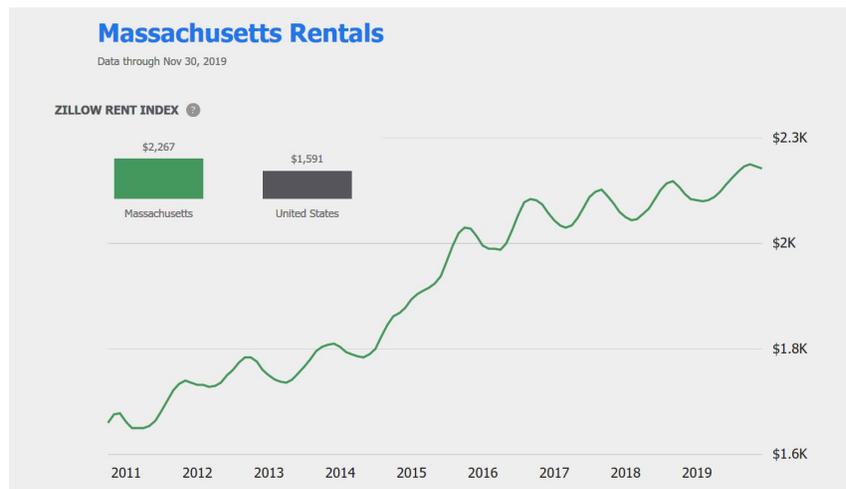
After having allowed our industries and survives to become vulnerable to disaster, Beacon Hill has done little to cope with it or even show that they take it seriously. Having gone home, the legislature now declines to use remote voting, effectively killing urgent bills for paid sick leave, for other protections for essential workers ,and for mail-in voting. Despite so many hotels sitting empty, the state has not acted to provide safe temporary housing for essential workers. Incidentally, candidates for office in Massachusetts like myself have struggled with this legislative indifference. To appear on the ballot, we are required to collect 150 or more voter signatures. Public health advocates pointed out how dangerous this requirement was in a pandemic, and requested that the legislature move the deadlines, cut the signature requirements, or allow for electronic signature-gathering. While the Senate considered a bill cutting the quotas for some candidates, no Representative in the House would even bring it up for discussion. Ultimately, the SJC had to step in and provide relief where the legislature failed to act.

This pandemic shows why our region cannot settle for passive or indifferent representation. We know of the diligent and effective constituent service that Senator Anne Gobi provides to central Mass., but a strong advocate in only one legislative chamber is not enough. Our region has long contended with declining manufacturing, a squeeze on farmers, and inadequate services, all allowed by the same indifferent attitude from Boston that has exacerbated the crisis of 2020. This has to change--the state must commission vital medical equipment, expand our hospital capacities, and hire unemployed citizens to train for testing, tracking, and tracing the virus, before the likely next wave of coronavirus in the fall, as well as before the next pandemic. The Commonwealth must help our already struggling workers and small businesses to rebound, and in the longer term, we must rebuild our manufacturing and human resources for the benefit of our region and the Commonwealth. 2020 must be a turning point, and the hard sacrifices made by our essential workers must not be in vain.

## 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](http://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.).**

**SB:** Every community has different housing needs, and there is a divide between the outrageously expensive Boston region and the other, merely expensive, parts of the state. Every town and city should have the power to decide its own housing laws and policies, and the 1994 law taking away towns' and cities' control over those policies should be repealed. The commonwealth must also act to increase the stock of much-needed affordable housing, public housing, and senior housing in all parts of the state. In 2016, helped to lead the successful effort, as a representative of Uptown Progressive Action in the larger coalition of Northern Manhattan Is Not For Sale, to stop re-zoning bills in New York that would have encouraged a flood of expensive high-rise buildings and displacement in the working-class communities of Inwood and Washington Heights. I testified and multiple hearings and helped to organize and lead a mass demonstration in Inwood that garnered media attention. As high-end development spreads and rents and prices rise around the Boston area as well, communities need support in preserving and expanding the housing stock that working people need to stay in their home neighborhoods and thrive.

- 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?**

**SB:** YES.

This is exactly the sort of trade-off that should be decided by towns and cities on their own.

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?

**SB:** YES.

Additionally, when landlords do increase rent, tenants should have the option to take their last two months rent-free in order to be able to save up the needed funds to move.

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?

**SB:** YES.

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?

**SB:** YES.

## 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

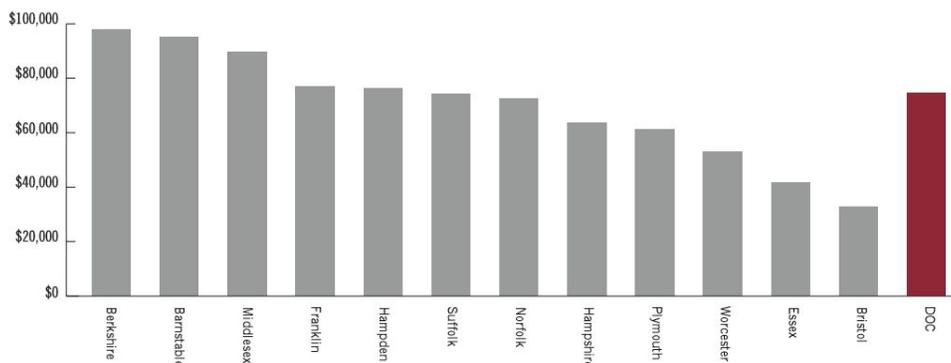
Racial/Ethnic Disparity in Imprisonment (2014)	
Black : white ratio	7.5
Hispanic : white ratio	4.3

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.).**

**SB:** The money that states like Massachusetts dump into the large prison and jail population would be better spent on prevention of crime through community-controlled policing and addiction intervention and treatment.

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

**SB:** YES.

Investigation and prosecution should always be handled by those who are impartial; in too many cases, the relationships of mutual dependency between police and prosecutors make that impossible. Both parties should be freed from having to worry about such conflicts of interest.

- 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?**

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

**SB:** I believe that all of these reforms may be beneficial, but I would need to know the exact proposals and examine the research before definitely endorsing them.

- 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?**

**SB:** YES.

Even 10 to 15 days I believe can be traumatic. No judge or jury has the power under law to sentence a prisoner to such a damaging punishment as prolonged solitary confinement, and no prison warden should be able to either.

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?

**SB:** 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?

**SB:** YES.

Prices in a prison commissary should be identical to those in an ordinary retail store, and the same minimum wage and worker-safety laws should apply to any prison labor as apply to ordinary jobs.

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?

**SB:** YES.

I do not believe that the duty to enforce federal immigration law should be thrown onto our local police. However, I would have to consult carefully with advocates and experts on all sides before I definitely pledge to support the Safe Communities Act.

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

**SB:** YES.

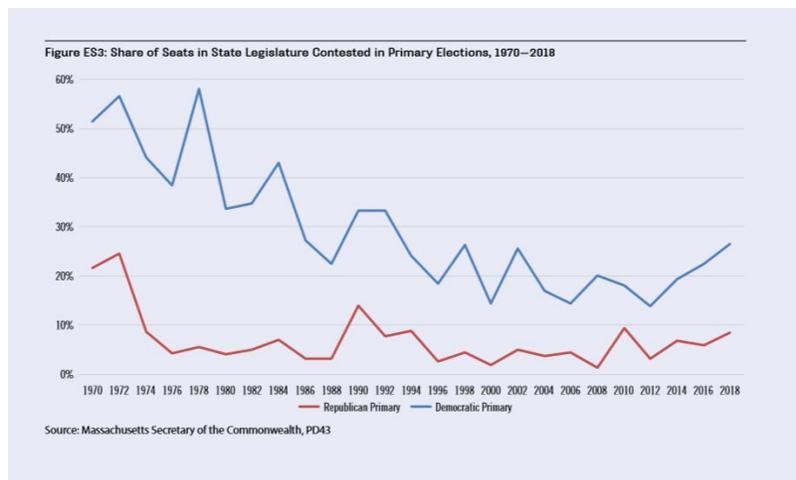
The worst thing for everyone is to have unprepared and dangerous unlicensed drivers on the roads.

## G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

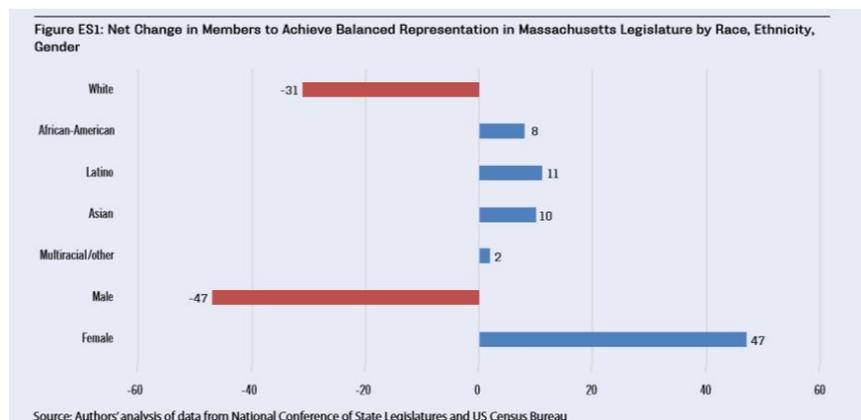
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine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

**SB:** The problem of big money in politics touches all others, making solutions nearly impossible. I have seen the insidious influence of money everywhere that I have lived in my life, and shortly after coming to central Massachusetts, I became active in Wolf-PAC, a citizens' organization aimed at undoing the effects of Citizens United and other judicial rulings holding that money is speech. I have testified in person and in writing at legislative hearings and at the Massachusetts Citizens Commission; my written statement was quoted in the Commission's report of their initial findings. States, cities, and towns must be able to agree through the democratic process on reasonable limits on spending and especially outside money and dark money in their lawmaking processes and elections. I also know, from having worked to promote the We the People Act, that our legislature is extremely opaque and unaccountable, with decisions made behind closed doors, with unrecorded committee votes, and often unduly controlled by the party leadership. Hearings and debates are often announced at the last moment, with the public having no real chance even to follow what is happening in the legislative process, let alone to give their input. Considering our history and our geography, Massachusetts ought to be the most transparent and democratic state, not among the least.

- 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?**

**SB:** 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...?**

- All committee votes, whether taken by electronic poll or formal roll call?
- All written testimony submitted for or against bills?
- Reader-friendly summaries of bills currently in or reported out of committee?

**SB:** The state ought to provide clear readable and searchable status updates on every bill, including adequate notification before bills are debated or voted on.

- 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...?**

- Standing for a recorded vote when a colleague asks for one on any amendment which you have co-sponsored?
- Making your committee votes available online on your website?

**SB:** The minimum numbers of legislators required to call for a roll-call vote should be lowered to two.

- 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?**

**SB:** 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?**

**SB:** 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?

**SB:** 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)?

**SB:** I would have to consider carefully the costs and benefits of early voting for municipal elections in small towns with limited budgets and limited numbers of voters.

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

**SB:** YES.

There is no reasonable argument against Ranked Choice Voting in my view. Let voters have more input into what sort of government they do or do not want.

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?

**SB:** YES.

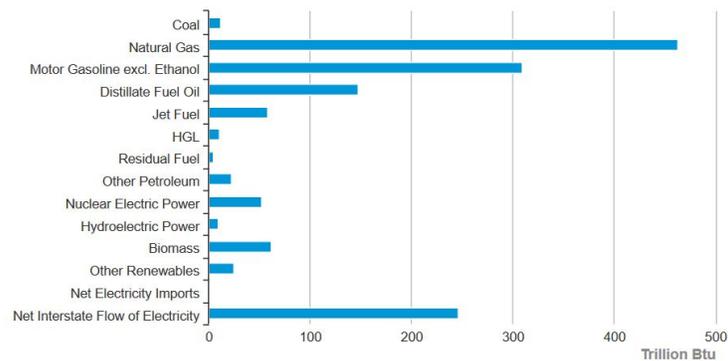
## H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

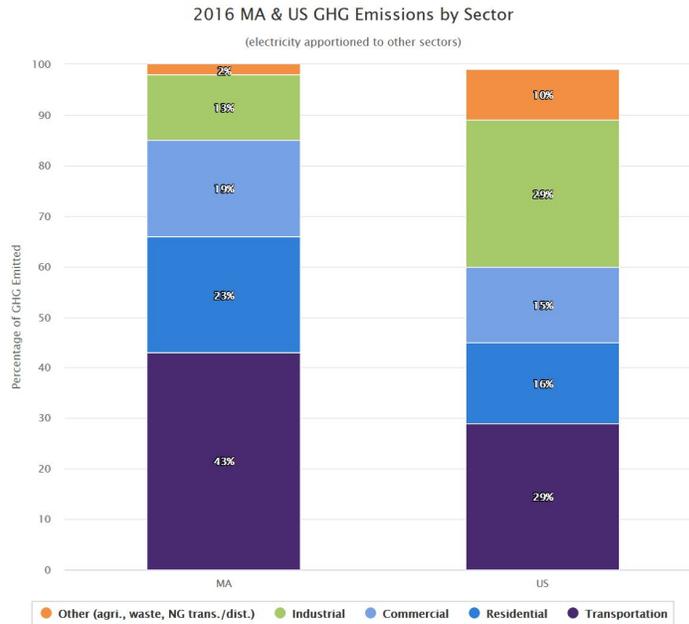
**Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.**

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.).**

**SB:** My town of North Brookfield used to have a streetcar to transport workers among the factories and businesses on Main Street; it also hooked up to a passenger railway connecting all of the Brookfields and Spencer to Worcester and by extension the entire country. Residents of small towns could live, work, and travel abroad safely and efficiently without an automobile. Ironically, even as technology has improved and environmental awareness has heightened, the Commonwealth has scrapped and forgotten about that town-to-town transit system. We must revive affordable and safe mass transit both for the sake of the environment and to free people, especially seniors and those with disabilities, to live wherever they choose without having to drive. There is much discussion today of re-opening the east-west passenger rail along the Route 9 corridor, which I support as long as it is efficient and cost effective, but more importantly, I believe that in rural central Massachusetts we must create an efficient and reliable town-to-town shuttle route, so that rural residents can reach groceries, doctors offices, and state services, most of which are located in Southbridge or Worcester.

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

**SB:** NO.

I would need to weigh the possible benefits or environmental costs of biodegradable shopping bags before necessarily committing to a ban on all single-use bags.

- 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?**

**SB:** YES.

The state must support the deployment of small-scale renewable energy generation for homes and businesses, such as through solar panels and water turbines. Any caps or limits on large-scale solar and wind farms should be decided by towns and cities individually.

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

**SB:** YES.

Hydropower generation at the sites of old factory mills is a potentially very powerful option to pursue in many parts of Massachusetts that has not been explored.

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?**

**SB:** YES.

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

**SB:** 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?**

**SB:** 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?**

**SB:** YES.

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?**

**SB:** 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.

**SB:** As a gay man, I would be the first openly LGBT person to represent this district in the State House, As part of my mission to revive rural healthcare, I would include services aimed at LGBTQ youth, who have inordinately high rates of depression and suicide.