



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: 5/18/2020

Candidate: Nichole Mossalam

Office Sought: State Representative, 35th Middlesex

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OVERVIEW

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

Our Questionnaires starts with an "About You" section and ends with an opportunity for you to include additional remarks beyond what we asked.

The bulk of our questionnaire is focused on the issues outlined in our [Progressive Platform](#), which also inform our [Legislative Agenda](#). We are interested in your overall philosophy as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.

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

We encourage you to expand your answers beyond "yes/no" in the additional comments space provided on the form, but please keep answers < 150 words.

Issue Subsections:

- A. Revenue and Taxation
- B. Jobs and the Economy
- C. Education
- D. Health Care
- E. Housing
- F. Racial and Social Justice
- G. Good Government and Strong Democracy
- H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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

I. About You

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

NM: I'm running for State Representative because the system has become rigged against working families, people of color, and low income residents by the Massachusetts House of Representatives that refuses to pass legislation to end systemic inequality and poverty. I believe we deserve a state representative who will work with our community to make affordable, reliable public transit, housing justice, and healthcare a right for all residents, regardless of income or employment. These will be my top 3 legislative priorities if elected.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

NM: I'm currently the chair of Malden's Disability Commission where I've worked with community members over this past year to begin the process of developing a city-wide accessibility study, address parking and playground accessibility issues at public schools, and roll out police stop communication cards for those hard of hearing. I'm also the Founding Director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Medford and have served in a similar capacity to other mosques in the area for over 7 yrs. In this capacity, I have been a social worker, public spokesperson, counselor, government relations specialist, and much more in service to our very diverse community. More importantly, I am a working mother living on a tight budget who will feel the impact of every decision made as a State Representative.

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

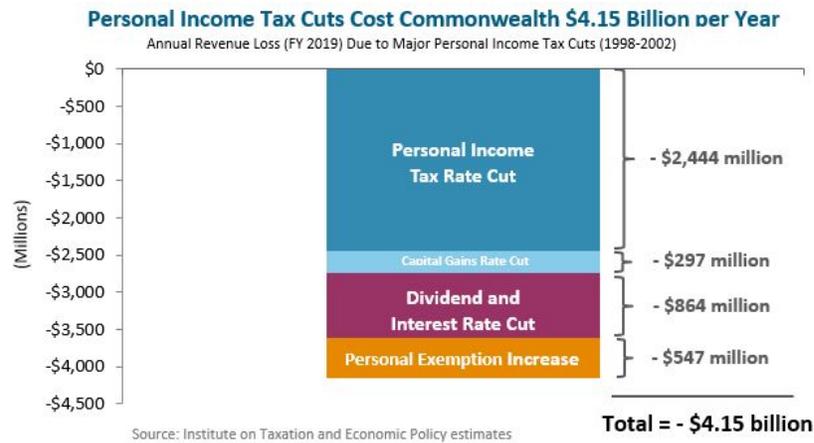
NM: We need to elect new people who understand that it's time for a new style of political representation that puts our community needs over corporate interests. I am tired of empty promises from politicians who lack the urgency to fix our housing, medical debt, and transportation crisis because they're not personally impacted by them. The housing, healthcare, and transportation crisis we face today have been building for generations because status quo politicians have been either unable or unwilling to take action. Like so many millennials, I've had my life derailed by crushing medical debt, experienced homelessness, and my family and I struggle with the soaring costs of housing in Greater Boston. The other biggest obstacle, is of course the rigged political system, lack of transparency, and the role money plays in our politics.

II. The Issues

A. Revenue and Taxation

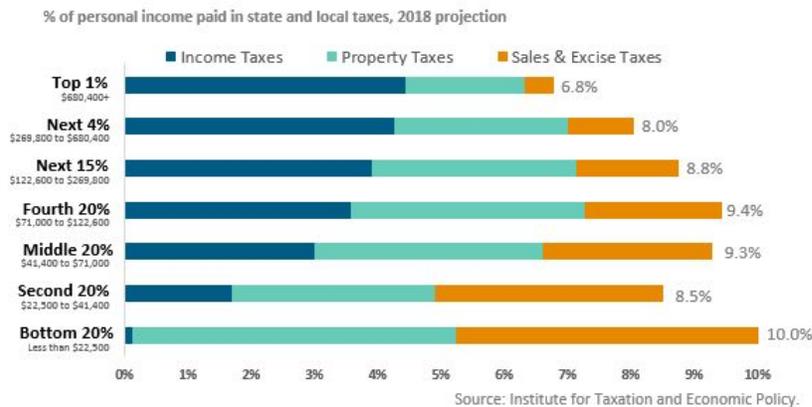
Between 1977 and 2016, Massachusetts [reduced state taxes](#) by more than all but two other states. Because of income tax cuts enacted between 1998 and 2002, Massachusetts loses over \$4 billion in tax revenue *each year*--\$4 billion that is not invested in our roads, bridges, schools, parks, and services, 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.

Highest Income Taxpayers Pay Smaller Share of Income in State and Local Taxes



- 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.).**

NM: For years in this country we have watched as income inequality has risen to its current staggering levels. Corporations and the ultra-wealthy benefit from public services like schools, infrastructure, and public health just as much as everyone else. As a State Representative, I would fight to reform the tax system to be one where everyone pays their fair share. For example, the Fair Share Amendment, introduced this session after the corporate lobby succeeded at kicking it off the 2018 ballot, is a reform I have long wished to see enacted. Additionally, corporations have avoided paying their fair share in taxes through the use of offshore tax havens. I would fight to reverse the 2018 decision to allow multinational corporations to exude 95% of their Massachusetts GITLI taxation. Fourteen other states including our neighbors Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island all tax 50% of GITLI apportioned to their state.

- 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?

NM: I would work to reform the regressive tax code we have that has been weighted against working class families. The power and money used by large corporations to influence our government is readily apparent in our tax code. In order to provide equal services and combat the extreme wealth gap in our commonwealth, we must change to a more progressive tax system and it must start with increased transparency on Beacon Hill. Nothing highlights this more than when the House rushed to pass a supplemental budget bill last year that would have given further tax cuts to corporations and three representatives stood up against it. The attention their actions drew enabled the State Senate to stand firm and defeat this item in conference.

- 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")?**

NM: YES.

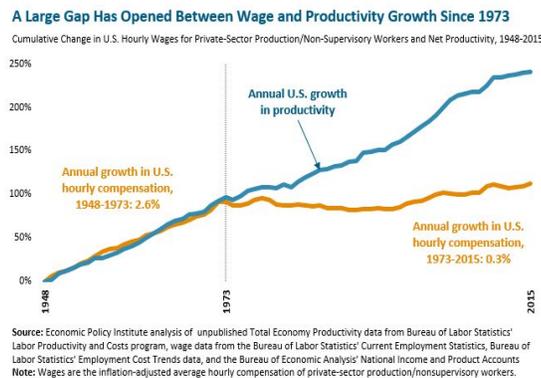
- 4. Progressive Revenue.** Massachusetts will not see new revenue from the Fair Share Amendment until 2023, but we have unmet needs now (and will still even with the Fair Share Amendment). Which policies would you support to make a more progressive tax code?
 - Raising the corporate minimum tax for 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?

B. Jobs and the Economy

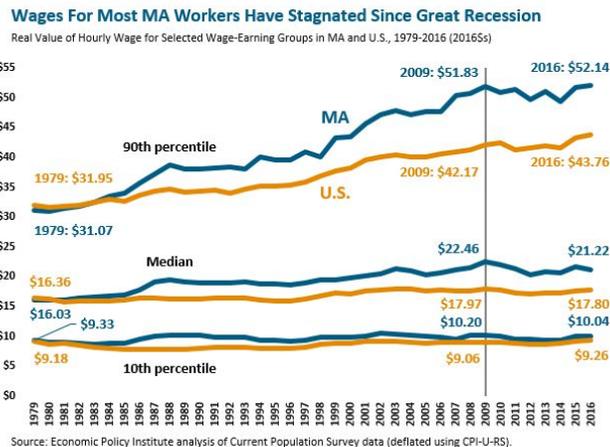
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which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



Wages for most MA workers have remained stagnant since the Great Recession.



- 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.).**

NM: As the grand daughter of a Steelworkers' Union Steward and the daughter of a United Food and Commercial Workers' Union (UFCW) Steward, I know the vital role unions play in workers' rights and setting industry standards for education, skill levels, and training. When I began working as a 15-year-old in Utah, a "right to work" state without labor protections, I experienced wage theft, denial of breaks, and other preventable workplace hardships. Thankfully, my mother, who was a teamster before she fought alongside her co-workers to unionize their workplace with UFCW, provided the guidance I needed to protect myself. I know first hand how critical the right to organize is for the working and middle classes of this nation. I have always, and will continue, to fight for workers rights' to organize, for fair and safe working conditions, and for a living wage.

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

NM: YES.

This policy is a holdover from when African Americans were freed from slavery and the service industry was their entry into the economy. While its racist roots have been forgotten, it is part of a system that further exacerbates the wealth gap and creates more economic inequality and instability. The effect of the current Covid situation on our economy has served to further highlight this weakness. Many service workers suddenly find themselves out of work who were making subminimum wages (a mere \$4.95 per hour), because they are tipped workers, and the unemployment insurance is understandably insufficient. The economic hardship these hardworking individuals now face is a direct result of this flawed system and should be fixed. All workers deserve a living wage, and now more than ever I would fight for eliminating this subminimum wage for tipped workers.

- 3. Wage Theft. Do you support holding businesses responsible for the wage violations of their subcontractors when the work they do is substantially connected to the company's operations?**

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

Not only does this need to be restored, but we must begin to look at overtime protections for salaried workers as well.

- 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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

I would also work to restore and advance these rights.

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?

NM: YES.

C. Education

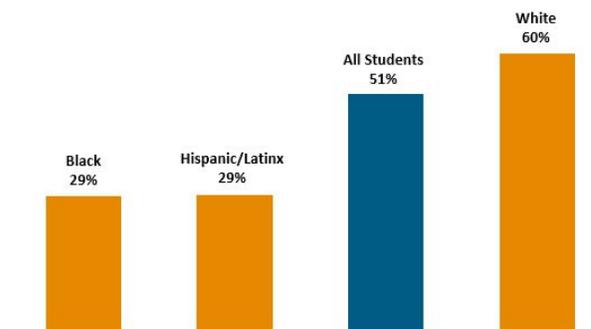
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country.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

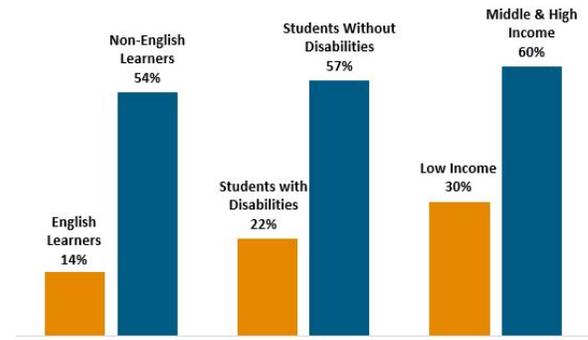
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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

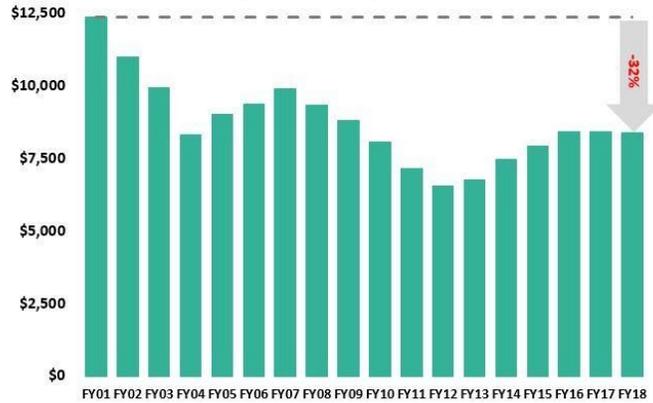


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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.).**

NM: A top priority of mine will be to address unfunded mandates by the legislature. Districts are routinely given directives from the state such as teacher-to-student ratios for special education and computer-only MCAS testing, but not the resources to implement these changes. Also, while the Student Opportunity Act is a good start to address the compounded problems of years of underfunding, that is all it is. Despite the increase in funding, many school districts will still receive "minimum-aid-only", which will provide below inflation budget increases for the coming years. Securing additional funding for higher education is also a critical priority. The Cherish Act will begin to address this problem by restoring funding levels to FY01, adjusted for inflation, and reverse the, in effect, over 31% of funding cuts since then. Once this is passed, we must immediately act to cancel student loan debt which continues to hold too many students hostage.

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

NM: YES.

Research has shown that universal pre-kindergarten programs have significant long-term benefits for all children who attend them. This is especially true for those at-risk individuals who so often fall behind in our current system. These programs can play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap. That is why I support expanding universal pre-kindergarten programs for the entire state of Massachusetts. While having a variety of communities across the state adhering to a rigid one-size-fits-all mentality for these programs would be a mistake, I would want to support programs that emphasize comprehensive development needs over academic skills to ensure that we give our students the best, most rounded education we can.

- 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?**

NM: Properly funding our education system is a top priority. To that end, I would not be afraid to question leadership about inadequate education proposals and would testify to its

importance in the State House. I would go even further in supporting legislation to establish more funding for the education system in Massachusetts, given the funding gaps still left after the Student Opportunity Act. This will also be achieved by pushing for more progressive sources of funding.

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.)

NM: YES.

It is the marginalized low-income communities of color who are most impacted by the negative consequences of high stakes test taking that include budget cuts, school closures, and the loss of teacher autonomy which only exacerbates struggling school districts. Even when they are not affected by punitive measures, this system can have a negative effect on districts by forcing teachers to narrow the curriculum and spend too much time on test prep. I oppose this system and would like to see a moratorium on the use of standardized testing to evaluate its effectiveness and examine alternative methods for assessing educational progress and goals.

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.**

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?

NM: YES.

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

NM: YES.

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

NM: YES.

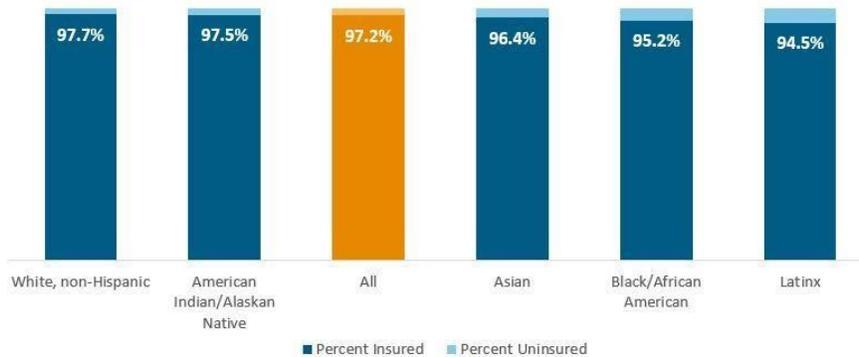
D. Health Care

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

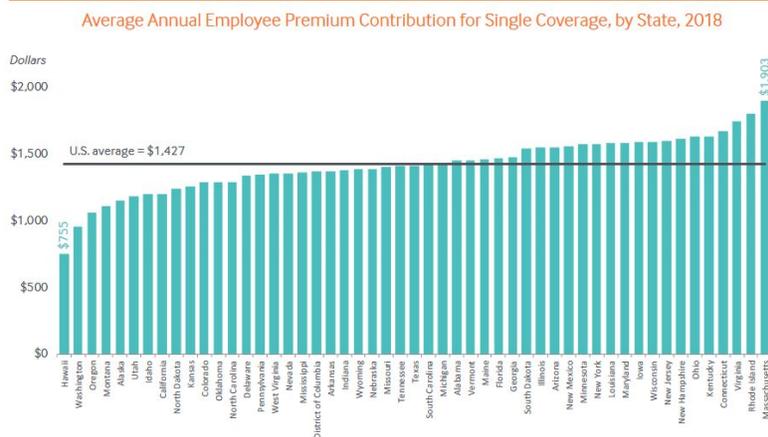
Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.



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.



- 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.).**

NM: This is an issue that is very close to me personally. When I found my life derailed by medical debt, I knew what I was going through was wrong and something no one should ever have to experience. At the age of 21, I filed for bankruptcy on over \$30k of pure medical debt. I firmly believe that healthcare is a right and will unapologetically advocate for a single payer system here in Massachusetts. In the midst of this global pandemic, it is more important than ever that we push for universal coverage in this state and a single-payer "Medicare-For-All" system is the best path forward.

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

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

This situation continues to put young girls at risk, especially as MA has no minimum age requirement for marriage. With An Act to End Child Marriage in MA, H.1474/S.2294, currently sitting in committee, young girls documented as young as 12 in our Commonwealth are married away with no say in their reproductive future.

- 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?**

NM: YES.

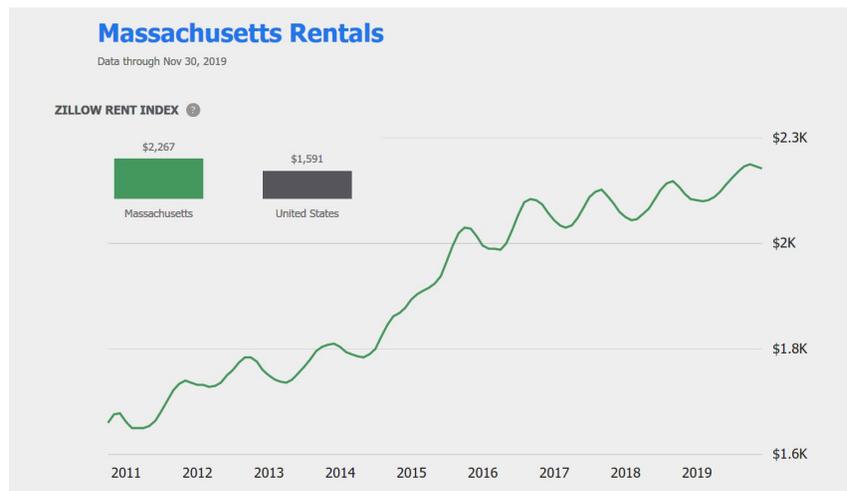
- 5. Pandemic Response. How would you evaluate the state's response to the Covid-19 pandemic?**

NM: While the social distancing measures, stay at home advisories, and the mask order have helped to slow the spread of Covid 19, our response remains inadequate as is shown by having the 3rd most cases and the many businesses, workers, and families under water. For example, the many service workers, who live paycheck to paycheck, that are suddenly out of work with no savings, the many small businesses who were unable to meet operating expenses and will not be reopening, and the record numbers of those in need of unemployment . The economic hardships many now face is a direct result of a flawed system from years of neglect. I believe now more than ever we need leaders who will proactively respond to the existing problems in the system, act on the science based recommendations of public health officials, and who will lead us into a sustainable recovery.

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](https://www.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.).**

NM: This is a complex problem, affecting communities across our state and will need a multi-pronged approach. As someone who has experienced the effects of homelessness firsthand, I firmly believe that housing is a right. To address homelessness in our state, we need to adopt a housing first model which provides permanent housing and support services for people experiencing homelessness. For current tenants, we must stabilize rent increases in our state by enacting a statewide percentage increase cap, similar to that of California or Oregon, pass a comprehensive Tenants' Bill of Rights to enact greater protections for renters, and update our zoning laws with have made construction of mixed-income or multi-family housing nearly impossible in most areas. I will fight to turn the tide of rising homelessness and housing insecurity.

- 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?**

NM: YES.

- 3. Tenant Protections. Do you support passing enabling legislation to provide municipalities with the authority to implement rent-stabilizing regulations, just cause eviction protections, stronger condominium conversion and foreclosure protections, anti-displacement zones, and options to help tenants manage the**

upfront costs of leasing an apartment?

NM: YES.

I am actively advocating for a Tenant's Bill of Rights which includes the above and more.

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?**

NM: YES.

I also support looking at zoning that discriminates against students and other single working professionals.

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?**

NM: 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.

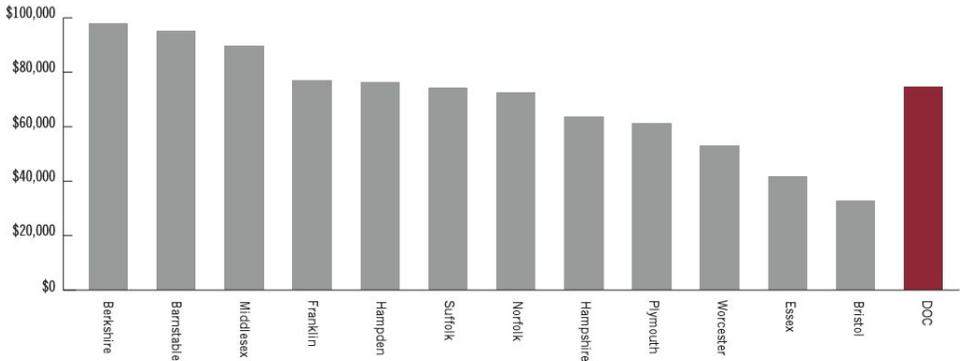
Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts’s population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. As the Trump administration in Washington ramps up a xenophobic mass deportation agenda, it is important for states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

NM: For far too long, lawmakers have ignored the most effective approaches for deterring crime and have prioritized policies which lead to high convictions and harsh sentences which has led to high recidivism and deep poverty. Our criminal justice system has focused too much on punitive action rather than real rehabilitation. This approach must change, and we need leaders who will prioritize true justice over harsh punitive action. When it comes to criminal justice, my top priorities will include ending mass incarceration, shifting focus of law enforcement to serious crimes and prevention methods, and protecting the rights of all Massachusetts residents regardless of race, gender, orientation, or citizenship status.

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

NM: YES.

3. **Sentencing Reform. The 2018 criminal justice reform bill was an important first step in reducing mass incarceration. However, in our "liberal" state, incarceration rates remain much higher than they are in other countries, and sentencing laws can be even more punitive than those in states viewed as conservative. Which of the following reforms would you support?**

- a. Eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid-related offenses?
- b. Raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21, in line with research that shows that young offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to reoffend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood?
- c. Decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adolescents, by creating an exception to the statutory rape law for youth close in age?
- d. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application?

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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

I attended the recent public hearing on this legislation and offered testimony in support as a leader in the Islamic Community.

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

NM: YES.

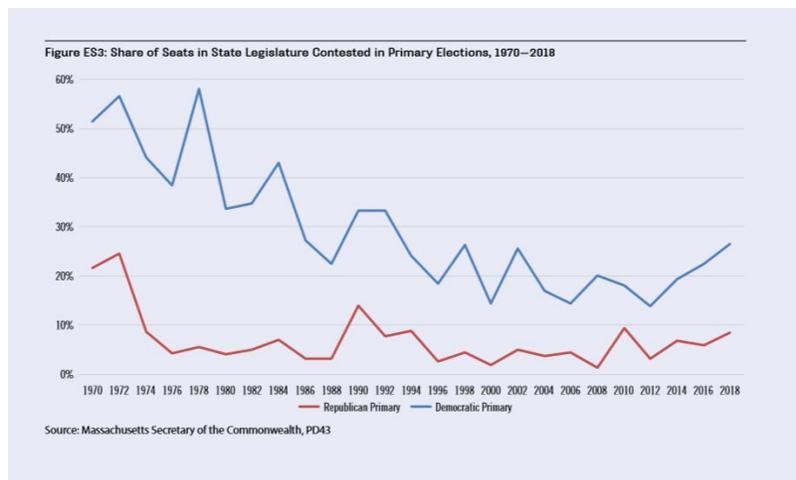
I have attended hearings in support of this legislation and volunteered on lobby days and spoke with legislators.

G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

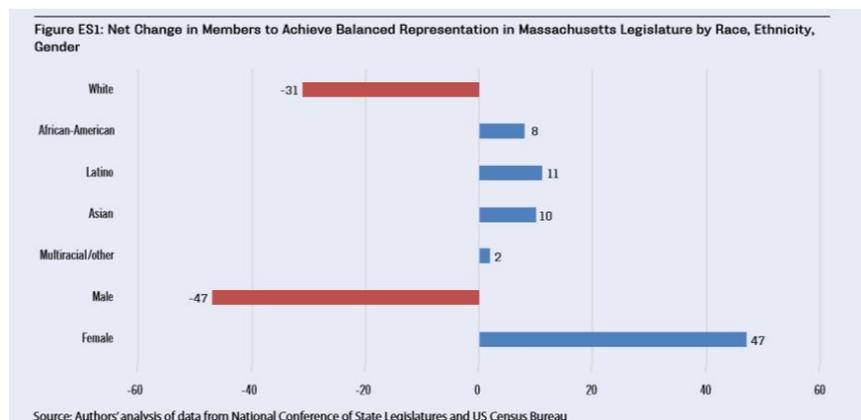
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine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

NM: A truly representative legislative body that is accessible to all voters and is transparent in its business is the heart of the progressive movement. In order to obtain this, we need strong leaders who will stand up to implement accountability measures, pave the way for more diverse candidates, and who will be proactive in addressing the issues. As a State Representative, I will work to build a broad coalition with my colleagues, activists, and allied groups to obtain these goals.

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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

I attended the hearing for An Act Promoting Equality and Respect in the Legislature, H.3572/S.1898, and offered public testimony in support.

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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

As a mother of three children running for office this is an issue which is of special significance to me. I cannot help but think if we had more mothers in office here in Massachusetts, we would not have to discuss the need for common sense regulations like these.

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)?

NM: This is an issue I have been very supportive of, having written an opinion piece published in the Boston Globe regarding the right to vote for prisoners and most recently having co-authored a resolution to expand Voting By Mail that was passed by the Democratic State Committee.

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

NM: YES.

I am a member of the Voter Choice MA advisory board and actively lend my support to their efforts.

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?

NM: YES.

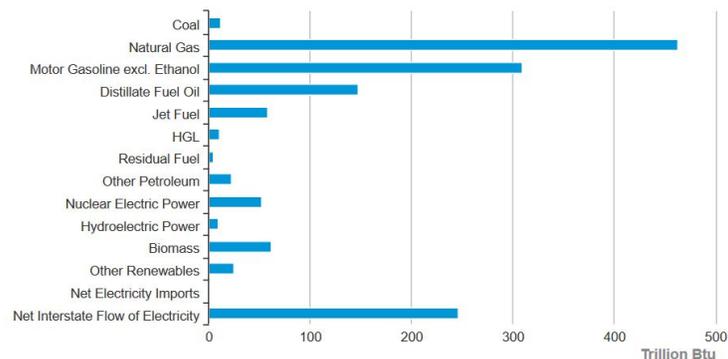
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

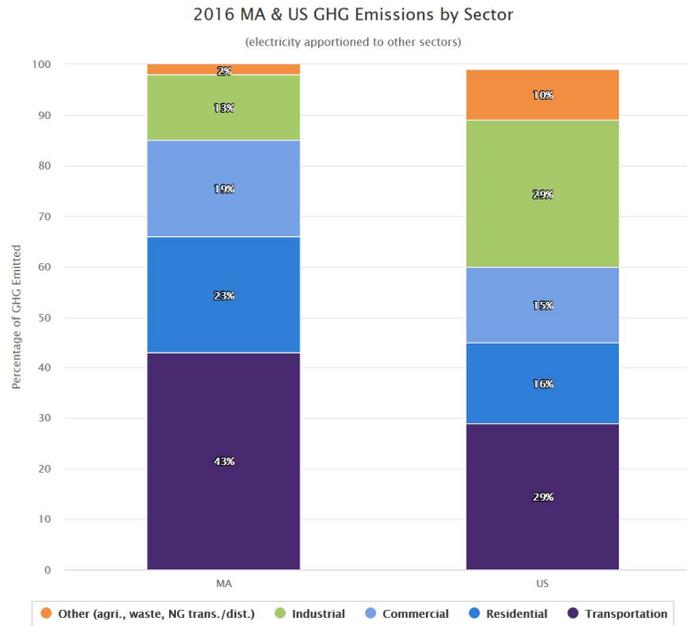
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.).**

NM: Climate change and its effects are now widely known to be an imminent threat to our communities. We know that a leading cause of emissions in our state is from power plant emissions and a reliance on fossil fuels. Providing fare free public transportation is a prime option to increase economic productivity, decrease racial and income inequalities, and lower emissions from traffic congestion. Lawrence is already offering this service and has seen a 24% growth in ridership as of January this year. We can also work to further incentivize ownership of hybrid and full electric vehicles. Additionally, we need to expand our alternative energy sources. Offshore wind holds the potential to hasten the transition away from fossil fuels, reduce emissions, and create jobs and we need to increase our procurement commitment. We can also expand the SMART and the Mass Solar programs to further incentivize households to go solar.

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

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

This is a very important issue to me, as I have experienced the Mass Solar Initiative first hand. My family was able to take advantage of the program benefits for lower income families to acquire panels on our home, but navigating the process to obtain the loan with a participating bank who understood the rules of the program, and were still accepting applicants since they had a cap or were still participating, was quite challenging. Some

immediate steps would be to provide more training for financial institutions participating in the program and enacting a more reliable system for banks to update their participation via the program's website.

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

NM: 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?**

NM: YES.

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

NM: 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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: 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?**

NM: 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.