



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: 5/24/2020

Candidate: Damali Vidot

Office Sought: State Representative, 2nd Suffolk

Party: Democratic

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OVERVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

Issue Subsections:

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

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

I. About You

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

DV: I am running for office because leadership requires doing what is right for the people even when it's not convenient. It wasn't convenient for me to sue ExxonMobil for polluting the Mystic River. It wasn't convenient to hold the MBTA accountable to riders or to hold Eversource accountable to the community. However, I am stepping up once again because if we are going to make it through this crisis, it will be through leadership that puts people before politics, and that centers equity in our rebuilding process.

After I am elected, my top three legislative priorities will be:

1) Housing reform: advocating for robust tenant protections and securing for people the right to a safe, accessible, and affordable home

2) Environmental justice: addressing COVID-19 through a public health and environmental justice lens; advancing a Green New Deal at the state level: eliminating fossil fuel investments as soon as possible, incentivizing renewable energy to replace those fossil fuels, and holding corporations accountable for contaminating our environment;

3) Economic justice: expanding union membership, increasing the minimum wage, and creating new training and apprenticeship programs for youth

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

DV: Years of lived experience in one of Massachusetts' most marginalized communities have allowed me to understand the most difficult issues our Commonwealth faces. During my teenage and early adult years I fell victim to street culture, which too often holds urban youth hostage. Through relationships I built in my community, I managed to get my life back on track. I started working as a youth worker in the same community I helped destroy. As a mentor, I began providing the same support that had been extended to me to other young people in my community. Shortly thereafter, I began my family and started to look at the world from a different perspective. These experiences will inform my legislative priorities because to me, the most marginalized aren't an abstract concept. They are my neighbors, family, friends, and constituents.

I ran for City Council in 2015 because I saw that our city faced many problems but our government wasn't listening to those who were most affected. Little did I know that this election would be pivotal to the transformation of Chelsea. That race saw the first majority Latinx council in Chelsea's history. I went on to serve as Chelsea City Council President until 2019, and am proud to have been an advocate and ally to all marginalized members of my community. During this time, I sponsored a successful wage theft ordinance to prevent employers from stealing our residents' hard-earned money; passed a plastic bag ban to reduce environmental toxins in our neighborhood; advocated for and passed an inclusionary zoning measure to ensure that working folks from the whole income spectrum benefit from development; and recently have publicly opposed the construction of a high-voltage electrical substation in East Boston. Throughout these issues, the guiding force behind my advocacy is the needs of our residents. They speak, and I listen.

When COVID-19 struck, I didn't think twice about jumping into action. I immediately began working with the Chelsea Pandemic Response Team, filming daily videos in English and Spanish to report the infection and death rates, and other important news to our residents, who were quickly finding themselves in deep trouble. I pressured Governor Baker to provide more PPE, food assistance, and financial assistance to our city after an otherwise lackluster response. Because of that, the National Guard delivered food to Chelsea for weeks (although they were recently called back); medical

professionals received more PPE than they had at the start; and Chelsea became a focal point not only for the damage the virus brought upon us, but because of our great community response.

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

DV: The role of the Speaker has continued to grow in power even as previous men in that role have been found guilty of various forms of corruption. This has translated to a system where individual representatives don't have the power to push for legislation they believe in, and where too often representatives simply vote in lockstep with the Speaker. We have seen this become a roadblock for popular legislation when it can't even get out of committee, and have even heard stories of representatives who publicly co-sponsor a bill but privately do whatever they can to ensure it does not make it to the floor.

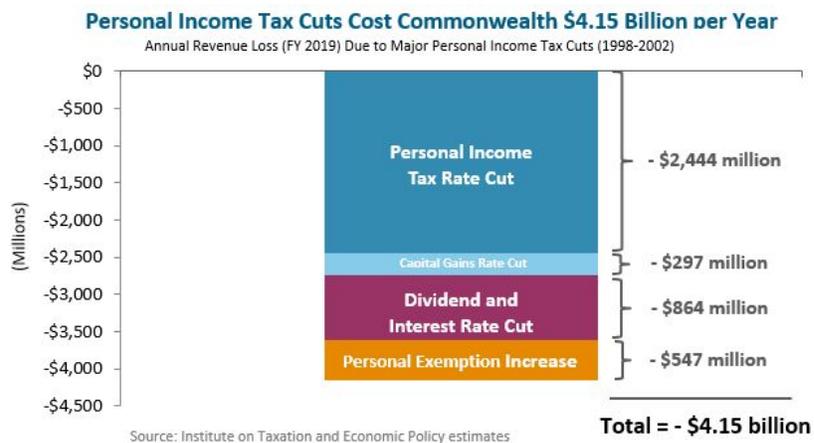
In addition to the systems put in place by the House, we also must confront the fact that most legislators, including many who call themselves progressives, have for too long ignored communities of color and other marginalized groups. This has prevented us from developing a solid progressive voting block that has enough sway to advance the issues we most care about. There are opportunities here to work with marginalized communities to ensure that true progressives represent them, and to advance a progressive vision through solid legislative work combined with community organizing.

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.).**

DV: Between 1993 and 2013, funding for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program declined by more than 50%, and funding for our schools has grown increasingly inequitable, to the point where the people had to sue their government for the right to a properly funded, high quality education. These are just two examples of how our state has been failing its people by not increasing the revenue necessary to provide them with the quality of life they deserve.

Given the wealth that Massachusetts holds, this is inexcusable. I have seen the impact of our inequitable tax system impact my community: many of my constituents in Chelsea suffer from housing insecurity and many of our students don't have access to the education they deserve. Throughout my time on City Council, I have seen tax incentives revitalize our downtown area, especially when targeted to local and family-operated businesses. However, I have seen how it can go too far when not properly evaluated, as incentives have shifted now to large corporations and unscrupulous developers. Constant re-evaluation and accountability are crucial to managing incentive systems, so we can ensure they are working for the community, not being exploited by powerful interests.

Everyone needs to pay their fair share, and because of the wealth and income inequities that plague our country, we need a progressive tax system. However, we must ultimately go beyond that to ensure that additional revenue is used in an equitable manner that prioritizes those communities that have been hardest hit by injustice in all its forms, especially now that those issues have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Progressive taxation requires promoting vertical equity in order to be effective, and when elected I will continue to fight for equitable taxation and allocation of resources across the Commonwealth.

- 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")?**

DV: 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

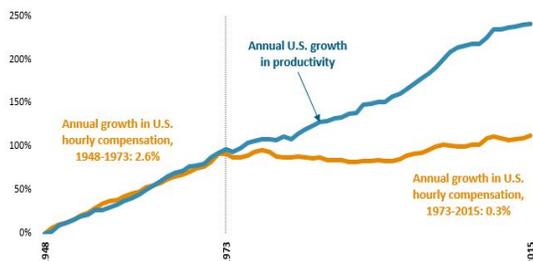
Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which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

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

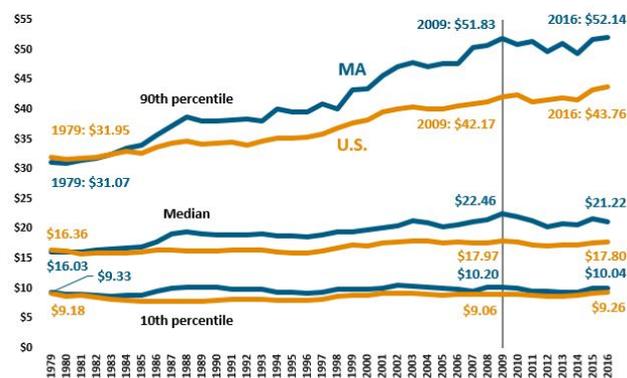


Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Trends data, and the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

DV: Every job should pay a living wage of \$15 per hour or more. A full-time job should provide a worker enough to cover the basic necessities for themselves and their family. I strongly believe this and it is why I stood with airport workers to support their fight for a living wage and their right to unionize. These were full-time employees who still relied on food stamps and other social safety net programs to support their families. I come from a union household, and have seen the power labor organizing can have on people's lives. For that reason, I believe in a massive expansion of union membership in Massachusetts.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, workers in jobs that have been called "unskilled" are now called "essential", and they continue working to keep our economy running because they have no other choice. Grocery store employees, personal care aides, and hospital cleaning staff make sure that we have food on our tables, that our most vulnerable are cared for, and that our sick have a clean environment where they can recover. These workers deserve to be protected and, at the very minimum, properly compensated for the work that they do.

In my first term on City Council I passed a wage theft ordinance to prevent employers from stealing from our hard-working residents. Since then, my advocacy led to the shutdown of a project by the developer Innes because they were hiring workers who were not offered prevailing wages, and I have worked with the Department of Transportation to ensure that the ongoing work on the Tobin Bridge follows legal hiring guidelines, ensuring that women and people of color have equal access to those jobs. I will continue to push for better pay and protections for all workers when elected, because all work is valuable, all work is skilled, and our economy should reflect that.

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

DV: YES.

- 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?**

DV: 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?**

DV: 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?**

DV: 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?**

DV: YES.

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?

DV: YES.

C. Education

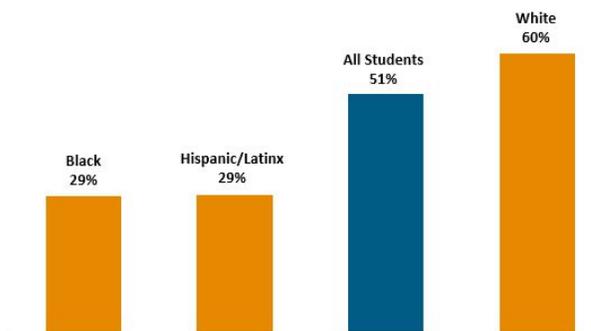
The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country.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

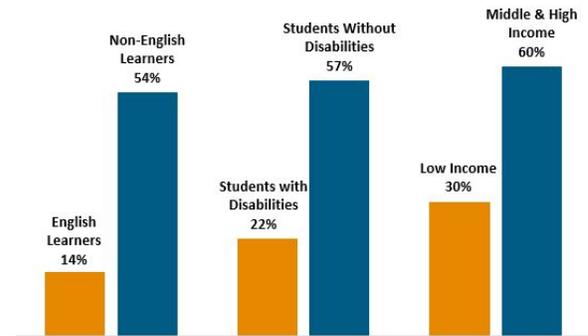
Share of MA 4th Graders Proficient on the 2017 NAEP Reading Exam, by Student Race, all students



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

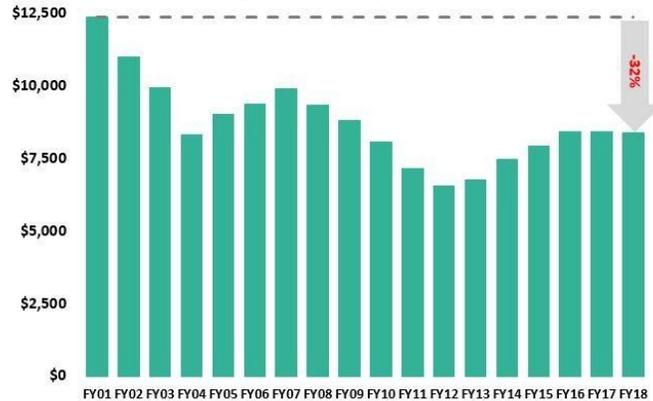


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2017

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.).

DV: Public education is one of the most important functions of our government. It is how we provide the next generations with the tools and social skills needed to understand the differences that make us who we are, and to learn how we can work together to build a better world. Every person has the right to an education, and our government has a fundamental obligation of providing access to the highest quality education possible, from preK to college.

Inadequate K-12 funding has been an issue in Chelsea and all other gateway communities for many years, primarily driven by our reliance on property taxes to fund our public schools. The Student Opportunity Act recognizes that when it comes to education, equality is not enough because so many other environmental factors shape our learning environment. Unfortunately, the differences in these districts don't end there. Many of the lowest-funded districts in Massachusetts are also communities of color, where black and brown bodies are often criminalized and where low expectations for students are often the norm. Because communities like mine rely primarily on state funding, so-called "accountability" measures are used to exert disproportionate state control over communities of color. I support eliminating high-stakes testing altogether. Instead, we should shift to alternative assessment models that incorporate feedback from students, teachers, and parents. These would look at the school's culture, resources, and student well-being, to determine whether the school has the resources necessary to provide a high-quality education, and how they are using them. It would ultimately provide feedback to the school on how to improve, instead of relying on tests that eliminate all nuance and incorrectly attempt to boil down the education process to a number.

In the midst of these inequities, there has been an expansion of charter schools that has taken money away from our public schools. My daughter attends a charter school because it has provided her with opportunities she couldn't otherwise have. But the problem is with the system that has underfunded our public schools and made charters an attractive option for parents. I came out in favor of the No on 2 campaign because I believe the solution to these problems isn't to continue expanding a system that excludes and takes resources away from other students, but to fund and provide all the supports that students need through our districts. Charters may never disappear, but they should be accountable to the public that funds them and they should not take resources away from our public schools.

Lastly, we need to ensure that students have access to options like trade schools and higher education, and that those options are free for residents of Massachusetts. Our education system should allow for any student to explore these different paths and complete whatever training they need to begin their career, because not all learners follow the same, traditional path through our education system.

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

DV: 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?**

DV: The SOA requires that funding be allocated equitably to districts, and Governor Baker's first proposed budget didn't do this, underfunding the low-income rate for the first year of implementation. Now that the COVID-19 pandemic has upended our budgets for next year and beyond, we cannot once again fail students across Massachusetts, especially the most marginalized and ones who come from communities that depend primarily on state funding to run their districts. We must prioritize education justice during and after this pandemic, and the way to do that is to increase revenues and use our rainy day fund to provide the hardest-hit districts with the funding they have long been denied.

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.)**

DV: YES.

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

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

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?**

DV: YES.

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

DV: YES.

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

DV: YES.

Undocumented students should also have access to a free college education.

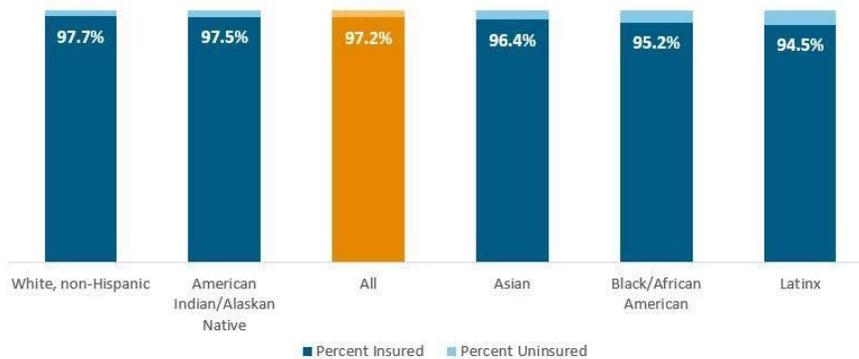
D. Health Care

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

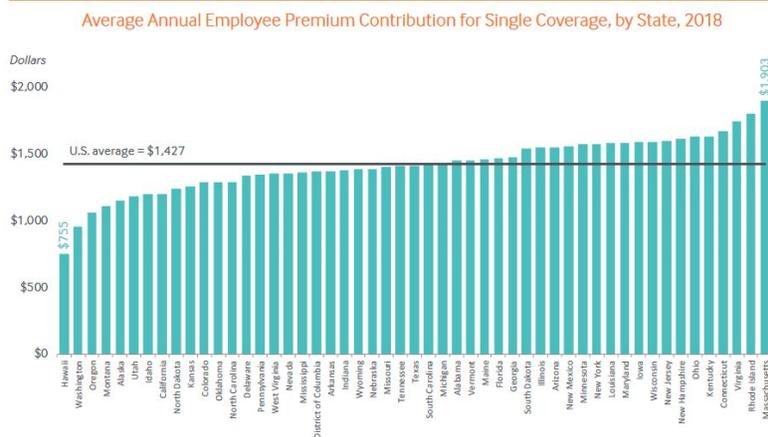
Percent with health insurance in Massachusetts, by race, 2017.



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.).**

DV: Health care is a human right and I will fight for an all-inclusive Medicare For All that includes dental, visual, reproductive, and mental services. Every person deserves access to quality, affordable health care. The US spends more per capita than any other country on health care, and while costs continue to rise, health outcomes don't improve.

Under a single payer system we will have better health outcomes as people will access primary care without cost barriers, enabling us to detect sickness earlier on. Bulk purchasing power will help drive down the cost of prescription drugs, which will drive down medical debt and bankruptcies, effectively putting people over profits.

Medicare For All is the ultimate vision. However, along the way I will advocate for policies that will improve our health care system, including a drug affordability board that will help ensure there is oversight on drug prices. I will also advocate for price transparency, so we can identify drugs whose prices are rapidly increasing, to give doctors and patients time to adjust and plan accordingly.

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

DV: 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?**

DV: YES.

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

DV: YES.

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

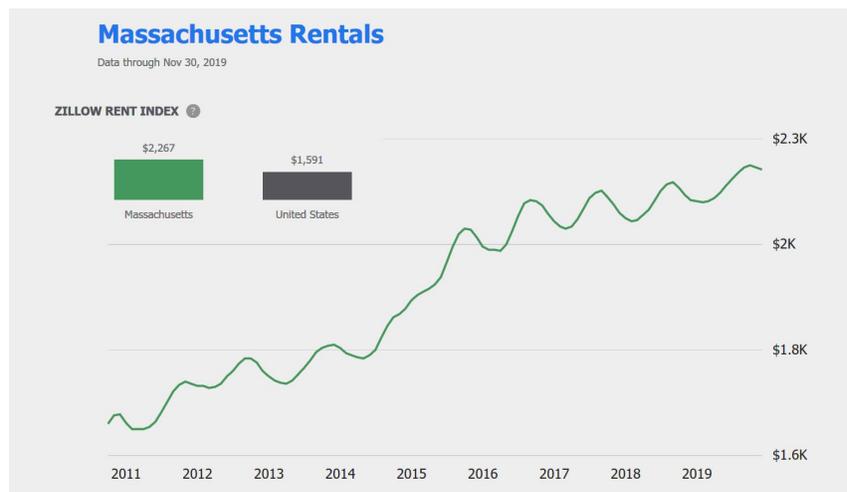
DV: I'm highly critical of the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under Governor Baker's leadership, our most vulnerable, particularly communities of color, have been neglected. It was only after pressure from both Congresswoman Pressley and Senator Warren that Baker changed his mind about reporting data on COVID-19 by race. Instead, he opted for a uniform response across the Commonwealth, without taking these critical numbers into consideration. Because of this blanket response, it was hard to make the case for additional resources in my district, even though it was clear from our reliance on local response that Chelsea's numbers were much higher. Ultimately I took it upon myself to organize a letter to the Governor from political, nonprofit, and healthcare leaders, to push the Governor for direct aid. If the Governor's response had been swift and holistic, my community and other districts could have been better served.

There has been a lack of long-term vision when it comes to addressing those hardest hit by this pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed and magnified the injustices that already existed in Chelsea and other communities like mine. Meanwhile, it's the same groups that are stepping up to provide aid - community groups, activists, and advocates. The administration needs a clear vision that doesn't continue to exacerbate the inequalities that already exist. It will be a long road to recovery, and we must ensure that we rebuild equitably.

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.).

DV: Housing is a human right, and when elected I will champion housing reforms to protect tenants and make sure people's housing is secure. We have to guarantee the right to a safe, stable, and affordable place to live, where homes are safe and in good repair, regardless if they are public or privately-owned. Furthermore, we must invest in housing so we can end homelessness and protect people from the negative consequences of an eviction. My ultimate vision would remove greed from the equation by centering people, not corporate profit, in our housing market.

One of my principles around housing is development without displacement, which I will advocate through inclusionary zoning laws, requiring realistic area median income (AMI) guidelines. Ideally, new development should be 50% affordable housing, scaled between 30-80% of AMI to ensure that even the lowest-income folks have access to housing and don't continue to be pushed out of their homes. By adopting this, cash-poor individuals will have access to good homes that they can afford. In addition, I will advocate for communities to open up additional opportunities for transit-oriented development of multi-family units. We need to ensure that families of all sizes have access to rapid transit near their homes to get to school, work, and to enjoy recreational activities.

I will also support policies that center the individual, their agency, and upward mobility. We must expand tenants' abilities to organize into associations, and establish just cause eviction policies that would prevent no-fault evictions, and require landlords to justify rent increases

above 1.5% of the consumer price index. My proposal will give every tenant, both subsidized and market-rate, the right to a lease renewal, and protections against unconscionable rent hikes.

I've advocated for rent control, expanding right to counsel, real estate transaction fees, and right of first refusal. I also passed a condo conversion ordinance, making sure that this process was made clear and protected tenants from vulnerable populations, such as the low-income, elderly, and disabled.

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?**

DV: 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?**

DV: YES.

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

DV: 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?**

DV: 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.

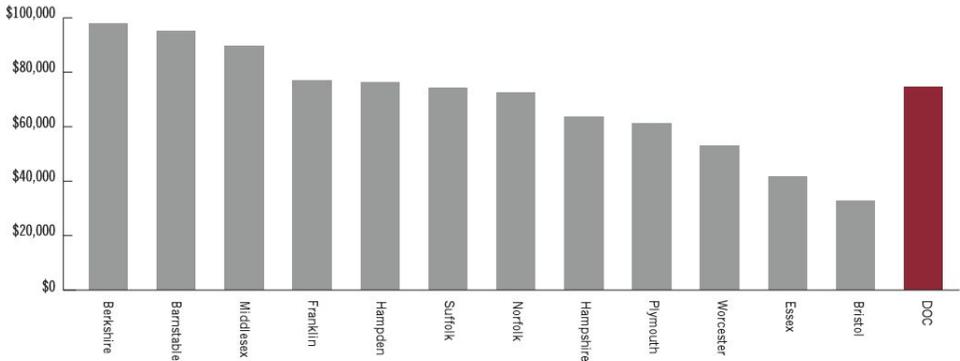
Imprisonment by Race/Ethnicity (2014)	
White imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	81
Black imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	605
Hispanic imprisonment rate (per 100,000)	351

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.).

DV: I have been a victim of police brutality, arrested, and jailed, so I understand the criminal justice system more than most candidates. On the other hand, I have also worked with police on youth engagement work and have oversight of a police department in my role as City Councilor. I remain steadfast in my belief that, if not done correctly, policing can get very ugly for Black and Latinx people. For that reason, I support requiring body cameras on all police officers, as well as the creation of an independent citizen review board for police shootings and any situation where someone is physically hurt by an interaction with the police.

My personal experience has allowed me to see how a criminal record can come back to haunt you and be used against you, even after you have gone through a rehabilitation process in the corrections system. Many years ago, I couldn't get a job because of my criminal record, so I wrote letters to every elected official possible to ask for help so that I could go to school and find a path forward. CORI reforms protected me and enabled me to become a productive member and leader of my community. We must focus our correctional systems on rehabilitation, not punishment, by expanding mental health resources within our correctional institutions, and by finding creative solutions so the formerly incarcerated can access good jobs. No one should be unreasonably punished, so I would support banning inhumane practices like solitary confinement, and do not support the death penalty in any form.

When it comes to racial justice and immigration, Chelsea has reaffirmed its sanctuary city status multiple times during my tenure as City Councilor. I will continue to support the expansion of sanctuary cities across the Commonwealth, and believe Massachusetts should become a sanctuary state. As the COVID-19 situation in Chelsea has worsened, I have advocated for city resources like food and housing assistance to be provided to all residents, regardless of citizenship status, because your citizenship does not determine whether you are hungry or in need of housing. I also believe that someone's immigration status should never prevent them from obtaining a driver's license, and that we must protect our residents' civil rights from federal overreach and cruelty. For years, I have spoken out against racial injustice, and this will continue to be a central value of my campaign and legislating after I'm elected.

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

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: YES.

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

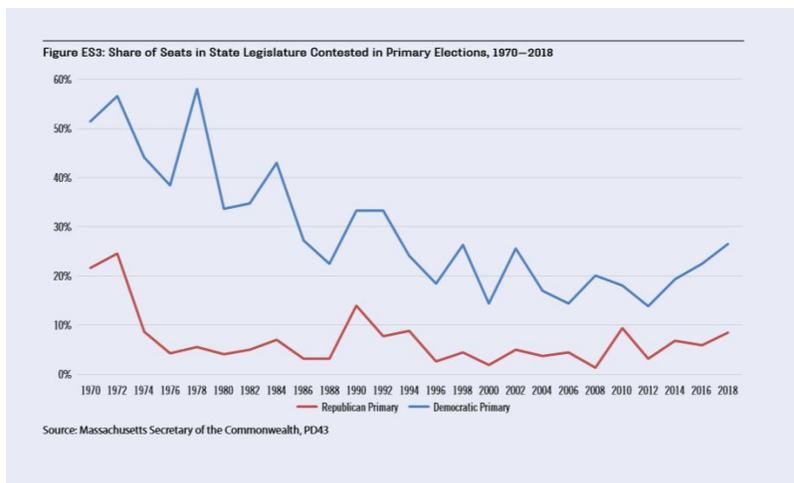
DV: YES.

G. Good Government and Strong Democracy

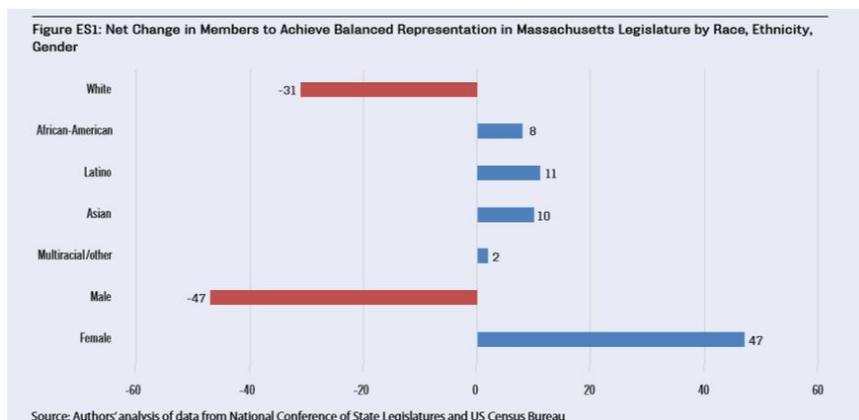
A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine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

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

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



Our legislature is not reflective of the population as a whole.



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

DV: A strong democracy requires engaged and knowledgeable citizens, so to me it all starts with schools. We need to teach our students about what it is their elected representatives should be doing, and emphasize the power that they have through their voice and vote. Students have to understand that their vote matters, so that they will want to engage with the democratic process once they become eligible.

However, being informed and engaged can only get you so far if the government is making it more difficult for you to participate. I believe voting should be very easy so elections can reflect the will of the people. I will fight to make Election Day a holiday, extend early voting, and allow people to register or correct their voter registration when they go vote. This pandemic has forced a conversation about voting by mail, which should be the norm for this and every election moving forward. I will advocate for ranked choice voting so voters can feel confident that their vote will never go to waste, and against any attempts to regulate voting through photo ID or other barriers that would reduce election turnout. These barriers overwhelmingly affect communities of color, further diluting their voice in our democracy.

Anyone who lives in this country should have access to the ballot box, regardless of their criminal history. Prisoners are part of our society, and they should neither lose their right to vote nor be excluded from their communities simply because they are serving a sentence elsewhere. I have also advocated for expanding the right to vote to non-citizens in municipal elections, because people should not be silenced simply because they are not US citizens, and parents whose children attend our public schools should have a say in who runs those schools, regardless of their immigration status.

And lastly, we must shine a spotlight on the processes of the Massachusetts Legislature. If we are elected by the people, then the people have a right to know and understand our votes. I will make all my committee and floor votes public, and stand for a roll call whenever requested on bills I have co-sponsored. And lastly, I believe that redistricting should be handled by an independent commission instead of by the very legislators who use this process to protect themselves from electoral challenges.

- 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?**

DV: 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?

- 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?

- 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?**

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: YES.

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

a. Election Day Registration?

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

c. No-fault absentee voting?

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

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

DV: YES.

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

DV: YES.

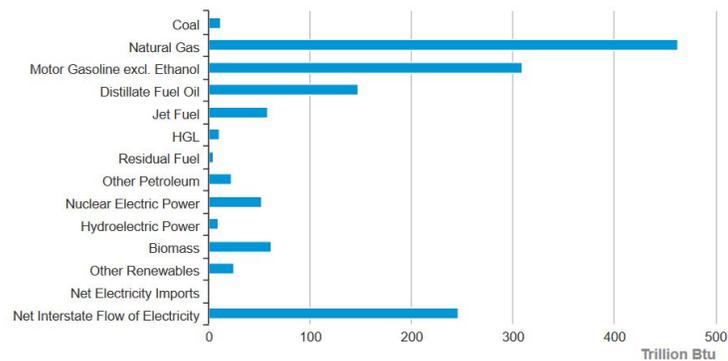
H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection

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.

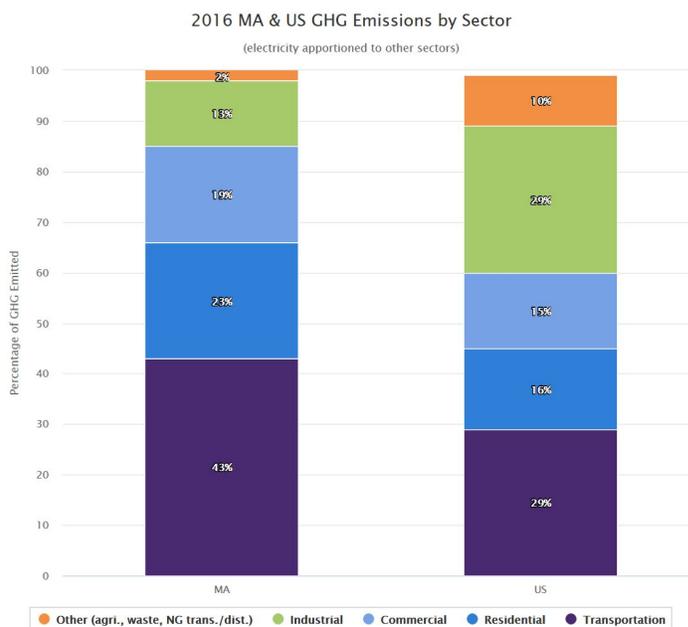
Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.

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.).**

DV: Chelsea has long been impacted by pollution from the trucks and barges that come and go as our city fuels the greater Boston economy. The airport next door pollutes our environment with the burning of jet fuel and noise from takeoffs and landings. Our city has high rates of childhood asthma, which is due to air pollution. As a City Councilor I have advocated for studies of the effects of noise pollution, passed a plastic bag ban, pushed against Eversource and the building of a substation on Chelsea Creek, and was part of a lawsuit against ExxonMobil for polluting our waters.

Expanding public transportation would help us reduce our reliance on cars and overall pollution. It would also make it easier for people who don't have cars to get to and from work. I have advocated for expanding bike lanes in the past, and would like to expand those efforts to also expanding light rail across the Commonwealth so residents don't have to live so close to their jobs. This would also help ease our housing markets, making it possible for more people to live comfortably in Massachusetts.

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

DV: 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?**

DV: YES.

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

DV: 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?

DV: YES.

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

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: 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?

DV: 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.