



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date: June 19, 2020

Candidate: State Senator Becca Rausch

Office Sought: State Senate, Norfolk, Bristol, and Middlesex District (Re-election)

Party: Democrat

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I. About You

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

I am running for re-election to the State Senate because I want to continue my work as an effective agent of positive change to advance social justice, fairness, and equity for all, as well as lifting up and supporting the residents in all 12 municipalities I represent. I've had a productive and successful first session, making strong advancements on climate change, elections, infectious disease prevention, reproductive justice, transparency, homelessness, and more. I'm just getting started; we have so much more work to do, and I remain all in.

In addition to advancing my many bills that were favorably reported out of committee this year but might not pass due to the constraints imposed by the coronavirus, my top 3 legislative priorities in the upcoming session are:

1. **election reform**;
2. **reproductive justice** (advancing the rights and abilities of all people to self-determine whether, when, and how to parent), including but not limited to pregnancy termination and care, health education, and child care; and
3. **advancing civil rights**, including but not limited to prohibiting body size discrimination, protections for people experiencing homelessness, data privacy, and creating an independent commission to investigate complaints of identity-based harassment and assault in the Legislature.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I am a lawyer-turned-lawmaker with an accomplished record of success in the Senate even though I'm only just approaching the end of my first term in office. I am an active advocate for and champion of transparency in government, infectious disease prevention, election reform, reproductive justice, broad spectrum civil rights, combating climate change, child care and early education, and more. My record speaks not only to my capacity to legislate effectively, but also to legislate with purpose.

Prior to my election to the Senate, I served as an elected Needham Town Meeting Member and an award-winning Secretariat-level attorney in both the Patrick and Baker administrations. I am also a former law professor and scholar, union steward, and private-sector attorney. My professional experience and expertise enables me to craft strong legislation and advocate for their advancement effectively, evidenced by the many new bills I filed that received favorable committee reports. On a more personal note, as a proud Jewish woman, spouse, and mother to two young children, I am deeply dedicated to lifting up marginalized voices and making Massachusetts better for future generations.

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

There are multiple strong progressive policy proposals on Beacon Hill, but the lack of comprehensive transparency in each step of the legislative process inhibits those proposals from coming to the floors of the House and Senate chambers. Without transparency, there is no accountability for stances or actions that do not advance progressive policies. Further, without comprehensive transparency, it remains difficult for voters and advocates to push for change. I am the leading champion of transparency in the Legislature and have already achieved

numerous successes in expanding transparency; I remain dedicated to this critical work.

II. The Issues

1. Please detail what advocacy you have done in support of the bills listed in Progressive Mass's [2019-2020 Legislative Agenda](#).

I've cosponsored every bill in the legislative agenda, and one of them is a bill that I personally filed. Specifically, I am the lead Senate sponsor of S.1898, to create an independent commission to investigate claims of identity-based harassment and assault on Beacon Hill. I am also the lead Senate filer of the local option Ranked Choice Voting bill, the complement to the statewide RCV bill on the agenda.

In addition, I have directly and vocally advocated for the advancement and passage of most of the bills listed, including especially the ROE Act, the Safe Communities Act, Election Day Registration, environmental justice, and the Fair Share Amendment. With specific regard to progressive revenue, the base policy behind the Fair Share Amendment, I filed an amendment during the Senate budget debate in 2019 to restore the corporate tax rate as part of a package of revenue amendments. I also secured through the amendment process and collaboration with colleagues a number of enhancements to the Student Opportunity Act.

2. What legislation have you filed to advance the goals stated in our [Progressive Platform](#)?

Nearly all of my bills advance the goals set forth in the Platform. As several of the bills are intersectional across multiple platform elements, I provide them below based on substantive legislative area.

- Reproductive Justice:
 - S. 1334 | An Act to reduce racial disparities in maternal health. I have made it a priority to approach my work on women's healthcare with a social justice framework
 - S. 1335 | An Act advancing the health of pregnant persons
 - S. 1452 | An Act for health education in women's correctional institutions
 - S. 1453 | An Act to ensure compliance with the anti-shackling law for pregnant incarcerated women
- Public Health:
 - S. 2359 | Community Immunity Act, comprehensive statewide infectious disease prevention and immunization requirements for daycares, K-12 schools, summer camps, colleges, and universities.
- Homelessness:
 - S. 76 | An Act relative to the safety, dignity, and civil rights of persons experiencing homelessness
 - S. 816 | An Act providing a bill of rights for people experiencing homelessness. This bill has been filed for multiple sessions. With my work and advocacy, the bill was advanced favorably out of committee this session for the first time ever.
- Anti-Discrimination / Promoting Diversity:
 - S. 1012 | An Act making discrimination on the basis of height and weight unlawful
 - S. 1898 | An Act promoting equality and respect in the legislature. This bill strikes at the core of the All Means All Agenda, and was highlighted in Progressive

Mass's 2019-2020 Legislative Agenda.

- Election Reform:
 - S. 419 | An Act to promote good democracy in primary elections
 - S. 420 | An Act providing a local option for ranked choice voting in municipal elections
 - S. 421 | An Act to modernize the central registry of voters
 - S. 423 | An Act to expand voter access (including no-fault absentee voting)
 - S. 2654 | An Act establishing vote by mail in 2020. Known as the [2020 Vote By Mail Act](#), this signature bill was the most comprehensive automatic mail-in voting legislation proposed to solve the problem of ballot access during the coronavirus pandemic. While [automatic ballot delivery was not adopted into the elections legislation](#) recently passed by both the House and Senate, several components of the 2020 Vote By Mail Act were included as key elements, including a requirement that the Secretary of the Commonwealth conduct a public awareness campaign to inform voters about the bill, which I filed as [Amendment 23 to the Senate bill](#) and was adopted with bipartisan, unanimous support.
 - Good Government
 - S. 422 | An Act to ensure a complete, accurate, and equitable census count
 - S. 1899 | An Act promoting governmental efficiency
 - S. 1900 | An Act regarding information governance
 - Education:
 - S. 325 | An Act relative to compulsory full-day kindergarten
 - S. 326 | An Act to achieve universal pre-kindergarten
 - Climate Change
 - H. 2772 | An Act to promote cost savings through the use of public water (joint petition with Representative Maria Robinson)
 - S. 2011 | An Act establishing building energy performance standards. Within weeks after being sworn into office, I worked with Representative Maria Robinson, a nationally recognized energy expert, and environmental protection advocates to craft and file this new bill to address carbon emissions and energy consumption of existing large buildings. Collaborating with Rep. Robinson and advocating effectively with our colleagues, we secured a favorable committee report on this bill within our first six months in office. A few months later, the bill was included in the Senate's Next Generation Climate Policy package, a suite of forward-thinking legislation to combat directly the root causes of climate change. I was proud and honored to help Senator Mike Barrett on different pieces of this package, including the large building energy consumption component and the creation of the Climate Policy Commission. The Senate passed the Next Generation Climate Policy package in January 2020. I'd been in office just over a year, and the climate bill was my first to pass on the Senate floor.
3. Last fall, the Massachusetts Legislature passed the Student Opportunity Act, updating a 25-year-old education funding formula. Notably, the bill was a promise of future investments in public schools and not the appropriation of funds themselves. How will you ensure that the Legislature keeps the promise it made to students, teachers, and community members with the Student Opportunity Act?

Now that we passed the landmark bill, for which I was overjoyed and extremely proud to vote YES, it's a question of funds. I have been and will continue to engage with colleagues to

secure the funding promised to our public education. For example, when the Governor's budget came out in January 2020 (made moot by COVID-19), it failed to equitably fund the different components of the SOA, and I immediately got to work, connecting with colleagues about righting that wrong.

4. How would you evaluate the Commonwealth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Not great.

We needed swifter, more decisive action much sooner. The absence of that leadership from our executive resulted in our relatively small state having one of the highest COVID-19 transmission rates in the country. We should have had a [stay-at-home order, not a suggestion](#), because words matter, and [we needed it far sooner than the advisory we ultimately got](#). (See media coverage [here](#) and [here](#).) We should have had a statewide order to [close the schools and daycares](#) earlier, rather than injecting chaos on both our school districts and our individual child care providers to try to sort through the data and medical literature to figure out what to do on their own. Indeed, we still need significantly better leadership on childcare and early education; put very plainly, this is part of our needed infrastructure and it has not been valued or uplifted as such.

We should have had transparency at the state and local levels about transmission rates without having to publicly demand that data from the executive branch. Further to that point, while I'm glad that the Legislature passed a strong health equity data bill, we should have had robust health equity data from the very start, rather than having to demand it and then legislate it. We still have a very long way to go to break down structural racism in health care broadly, and COVID-19 care specifically.

We also needed the [rollout of relief funds](#) to get into the hands of our residents much faster and much more smoothly. We also needed better administration of unemployment claims and small business assistance. I've lost track of the number of constituents we've helped resolve these issues. While my team and I are always here and happy to help, people shouldn't have to call their Senator to get the benefits they're due.

I do note that our transmission rates have declined even while testing continues to expand, which is surely a good thing, but the Reopening Advisory Board fails to include sufficient medical and public health experts, and does not include labor, child care, personal care attendants, nursing home residents, and other crucial voices at all. Those voices should be at the table.

5. The current economic downturn will have a major impact on state finances. Will you fight against cuts to public education, public infrastructure, and the vital public services and investments that make our state strong and fight for progressive revenue sources? If so, which sources of revenue do you believe the state should embrace?

I have been and will continue to be a strong advocate for progressive revenue as we head into the upcoming FY21 budget debate, which is sure to be a very difficult one indeed. I am also focused on corporate taxes, and specifically restoring the corporate income tax rate to 9.5%, which is what the rate was about a decade ago. Now we're at 8%. While this is technically

a flat tax, it is important to note that only the most profitable companies actually pay the tax rate, since most pay the corporate minimum tax of only \$432 annually, and it focuses on the companies that are actually earning revenues during the pandemic. Restoring the corporate tax rate is estimated to generate roughly \$375 million in additional state revenue annually. [We could do so much with those funds](#), such as slash public transit costs in half, fund full-day kindergarten, and restore MassHealth dental benefits, to name just a few options, in addition to replenishing our unemployment fund and investing in child care and early education.

6. Protests have broken out around the country against police brutality and systemic racial injustices. What state-level policies would you advocate for to address such systemic injustices, especially their manifestation in policing?

[I support the 10-point-plan](#) crafted and released by the Massachusetts elected officials of color. Points 5-8 are the state-level policy components, including peace officer standards and training; civil service exam review and oversight; a commission on structural racism, and statutory limits on the use of force. I am proud to cosponsor [Rep. Liz Miranda's bill](#) on the use of force, [co-filed in the Senate](#) by Majority Leader Cindy Creem.

7. The Massachusetts Legislature suffers from an overcentralization of power in Leadership and a lack of transparency in operation. What steps have you taken to advance the goals of transparency and shared power, and what steps do you plan to take in the next legislative session?

I am the foremost leader in the Legislature on transparency. I stand for every single roll call request, even when I am the only member of my party to do so. I made sure that the voting records in the committee I chair (Municipalities) are available by email request, rather than having to show up in person, a change that has become ever so much more important in a global pandemic. I publish all of my personal votes on my State House business website. I do a video series with Rep. Maria Robinson called Low Budget Beacon Hill, which is specifically designed to shed light on how the State House actually works. I crafted and published user-friendly instructions for navigating the legislature's website and tracking bills. In 2018, as a candidate, I spearheaded the transparency pledge. Now, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been calling for a process to debate and vote in the Senate since March. As I have said more times than I can count, when it comes to outcomes, there is no difference between substance and process. We serve at the pleasure of the people, and the people deserve to know.

III. Additional Comments

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.

I am a champion of justice, fairness, and equity in the Senate, even as a first-term Senator. I've led the charge and uplifted colleagues on a host of crucial issues. I didn't come to the Senate to sit around and merely show up for votes; I came to push for progress. I am making it happen, and I'm only just getting started. We have so much more work to do, and I will always be all in to get it done.