

**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 CONGRESSIONAL
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**



Candidate: Brianna Wu

Office Sought: US House Representative, MA-08

Party: Democratic

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

I. About You

1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priority pieces of legislation if elected?

BW: After the election of Donald Trump, I realized I could not simply hope for a future course correction. I had to step up and do all I could to make sure it happened. Trump's election was a turning point in our society. Racism, discrimination, and the suppression of human rights seemed to become legitimized. Then, I started to look to my own congressman for leadership.

I found that my congressman and my opponent, Rep. Stephen Lynch, first ran for the Massachusetts state legislature because he wanted to keep the LGBTQ community out of the Boston St. Patrick's Day parade. He promoted a "gay panic" legal defense for hate crimes. He voted for the Iraq War and against Obamacare. And, to say he has flip-flopped on choice would be generous. To me, his record is unacceptable and out-of-touch with Democratic values.

I am running for this office because the status-quo is simply not working. We are running out of time to address the existential threats to our country and our world. We need universal healthcare, a Green New Deal, tuition-free public college, comprehensive immigration reform, universal gun safety, money out of politics, and a guarantee of LGBTQ and women's rights. We need a bolder Democratic party.

My top three pieces of legislation are: Medicare For All, a Green New Deal, and the passage of what is currently H.R. 1 - getting money out of politics. As a software engineer and cybersecurity expert, I understand that setting universal standards and requirements for protecting our technology infrastructure is critical, and it will be a top priority of mine as well.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

BW: My background as a software engineer and small business owner in Massachusetts has given me an understanding of the many obstacles middle-class Americans face while seeking a better quality-of-life. I understand the struggles of everyday Americans, because I have faced them myself. As a target of the alt-right during the Gamergate controversy, I fought against constant unimaginable harassment, and in the end, I won. That experience taught me how to fight for what was right, and I believe I can bring those lessons to fight for a progressive agenda in Congress. As a well-known leader in the tech industry, I have the experience and expertise we need in Congress to address the greatest threat to our democracy - 21st Century information warfare, including foreign penetration of our electronic infrastructure, the unconstitutional assault on our privacy, and hackers stealing personal information. This is expertise currently lacking from our Congressional representatives, and I can bring unique knowledge and leadership to the body to address this critical issue.

3. What do you view as the biggest barriers to progressive policy on the federal level?

BW: By far the biggest obstacle to passing progressive policy is money in politics. Both the Democratic and Republican parties are run by corporate PAC and dark money. That money goes

to preserve the status-quo, and many of our representatives in Congress are more than happy to take it. As a progressive candidate, I do not accept corporate PAC or dark money and never will.

On the Democratic side, we have members of Congress who do not have the political will to implement progressive legislation, largely because they are owned by corporate money. The majority of Democrats and Americans want programs like Medicare For All and a Green New Deal. Electing progressive members of Congress who work for the people, not the powerful, will get us the progressive legislation we need to make a real difference in the lives of Americans.

II. The Issues

Our questionnaire is based on our [Progressive Platform](#): Shared Prosperity, All Means All/Racial and Social Justice, Good Government and Strong Democracy, and Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.

A. An Equitable Tax System

1. *What does a progressive tax system look like? Which specific proposals would you advocate for?*

BW: Our current tax system does not account for the rampant wealth inequality which is dividing us economically and socially as a country. We need a system that is equitable, not equal. A progressive tax rate that includes adding tax brackets after \$1,000,000 is critical to ensuring the wealthy are paying their fair share. We also need to implement a marginal tax rate, which would tack on an additional tax on yearly income which exceeds \$10 million in total earnings over a year.

B. Jobs That Pay a Living Wage

1. **Minimum Wage.** *The gap between productivity and wages has grown dramatically since 1973. Moreover, the federal minimum wage remains stuck at \$7.25—what it was in 2009. Would you support legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour?*

BW: YES.

- a. *And eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers?* **YES.**
 - b. *And index the minimum wage to inflation?* **YES.**
2. **Retirement Security.** *With the decline of pensions and other defined-benefit retirement plans in the workplace, retirement is becoming more insecure, and seniors are having to work longer just to stay afloat. Would you support legislation to....*
 - a. *Increase the benefits provided by Social Security?* **YES.**

- b. *Raising the cap on earnings that are taxed for Social Security? (Currently, only earnings up to \$118,500 are subject to the payroll tax.)* **YES.**
3. **Paid Leave.** *The US is the only industrial nation without paid family leave. Would you support federal legislation ensuring that workers can take up to 12 weeks of paid leave for a pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from a serious illness, or to care for a seriously ill family member?*

BW: YES.

4. **Union Rights.** *Unions play a key role in building a strong middle-class; however, unions have been under attack in recent years. Would you support the following efforts to strengthen the role of unions in our economy:*
- Prohibiting “right-to-work” laws at the state level?* **YES.**
 - Requiring employers to recognize a union when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards?* **YES.**
 - Prohibiting employers from interfering with unionization efforts, such as by compelling worker attendance at anti-union meetings?* **YES.**

BW: I am a strong proponent of union rights, and the growing of union membership both in Massachusetts and nationwide. Below are some additional initiatives I support that will help strengthen the role of unions: Prevailing Wage: Protecting prevailing wage in MA and nationwide. Prevailing wages in MA are determined and enforced by the MA Department of Labor Standards. Prevailing Wage is defined as the hourly wage with benefits and overtime, paid to the majority of workers, laborers, and mechanics within a particular area. This is usually the union wage. It is for government contracting and public works projects. Apprenticeships: Create federal apprenticeship standards to protect workers and trainees by providing the best and safest training possible, and build a strong labor workforce for the future. Project Labor Agreements: PLA's are pre-hire collective bargaining agreements with one or more labor organizations that establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project.[1] Before any workers are hired on the project, construction unions have bargaining rights to determine the wage rates and benefits of all employees working on the particular project and to agree to the provisions of the agreement. PLAs typically require that employees hired for the project are referred through union hiring halls, that nonunion workers pay union dues for the length of the project, and that the contractor follow union rules on pensions, work conditions and dispute resolution. PLAs are authorized under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). I will stand with unions to enforce the NLRA against any developer who tries to undermine the terms of a PLA.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

C. Quality, Affordable Health Care

1. **Medicare for All.** *Would you support the creation of a single payer/“Medicare for All” health insurance system in the country that would guarantee health care as a right?*

BW: YES.

2. **Prescription Drug Prices.** *Prescription drug prices in the US are consistently higher than in other countries. Which policies would you support to lower the cost of prescription drugs?*
 - a. *Allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies? **YES.***
 - b. *Allowing patients, pharmacists, and wholesalers to buy low-cost prescription drugs from Canada and other industrialized countries? **YES.***
 - c. *Allowing the federal government to manufacture lower-cost generic versions of prescription drugs when the market does not offer them? **YES.***

3. **Reproductive Rights.** *Would you support repealing the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except to save the life of the woman, or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape?*

BW: YES.

4. **Opioid Crisis.** *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?*

BW: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

D. Quality, Free Publicly Funded Education

1. **Education Equity.** *More than six and a half decades out from the Brown vs. Board Supreme Court ruling, our public education systems remain highly segregated and unequal. Please name three policies you would advocate for in order to address this.*

BW: The federal government has a limited, but significant, role in promoting access to equal educational opportunities. Ensuring state and local compliance with desegregation orders following Brown required decades of federal enforcement, oversight, and litigation, including passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The federal government's role includes implementation and enforcement of federal civil rights law; the use of investigative and oversight powers; data collection and dissemination; budgetary requests; and issuance of guidance, regulations, and statements of administration policy.

As a member of Congress, I would advocate for:

- Quality and free publicly-funded education, pre-K through post-secondary

- The elimination of residential boundaries in determining which public schools children may attend, which would give parents more options to send their children to quality schools, as well as the establishment of socioeconomic diversity in schools as a standard to focus on family income, as was pioneered by the Cambridge, MA school district in 2001. In that model, every school in the district must have a balance of lower and higher income families that reflects the district's socioeconomic distributions as a whole.
- The re-establishment of court oversight of the integration of public schools by the Justice Department

2. **Charter School Funding**. *The NAACP has proposed a moratorium on public funds for charter school expansion until a national audit has been completed to determine the impact of charter growth in each state. Do you support such a moratorium?*

BW: YES.

3. **Charter School Accountability**. *Do you support requiring that charter schools comply with the same transparency and accountability requirements as public schools?*

BW: YES.

4. **High-Stakes Testing**. *Do you support prohibiting the use of standardized testing as a primary or significant factor in closing a school, firing a teacher, or making any other high-stakes decisions?*

BW: YES.

5. **Student Loan Debt**. *Student loan debt is holding back the economy, as graduates are unable to make important long-term investments in their future. Presidential candidates have put forth various schemes to forgive student loan debt. Do you support doing so, and what would your ideal scheme look like?*

BW: YES.

State colleges and universities should be tuition free. Ideally, we would pay for it by imposing a tax on Wall Street transactions which would generate more than \$2.4 trillion over the next decade. The Wall Street taxes would include a 0.5% tax on stock transactions, a 0.1% tax on bond trades and a .005% tax on derivatives transactions, all of which is more than fair for wealthy Wall Street investors to pay. Once the student loan debt bill has been passed in the House and Senate, and signed by the president, the Secretary of Education would be able to forgive all outstanding student loan debts.

6. **Tuition-Free Higher Education**. *More and more jobs are requiring a college degree, but the cost of higher education has been growing faster than wages, contributing to a ballooning student debt burden. Would you support legislation to guarantee free tuition at public colleges and universities?*

BW: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

E. Affordable, Decent Housing

1. **Tenant Rights.** *Would you support legislation to establish a national just cause eviction standard, which would limit the grounds upon which a landlord may evict a tenant?*

BW: YES.

2. **Inclusive Communities.** *Federal funding can be a major source of leverage in shaping state and municipal policy. Would you support legislation to tie transportation or housing funding to...*

- a. *Ending exclusionary zoning practices? **YES.***

- b. *Repealing state prohibitions on rent stabilization policies? **YES.***

3. **Public Housing.** *Would you support the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment, which bans HUD from funding the construction or operation of new public housing units beyond the total that existed in 1999?*

BW: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

BW: The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, ability, and familial status. Notably, however, it does not prohibit class-based discrimination. As a result, the Fair Housing Act provides a loophole for discrimination that confines low-income people to certain neighborhoods by systematically preventing them from moving into areas of with access to opportunity. The Fair Housing Act must be amended to prohibit this class-based discrimination.

F. A Fair and Efficient Criminal Justice System

1. **Ending Mass Incarceration.** *The past few years have seen a growing recognition that the “tough on crime” legislation passed in the 1980s and 1990s has had a devastating impact on communities of color and has not improved public safety. Which of the following proposals do you support?*

- a. *Legalizing marijuana? **YES.***

- b. *Repealing mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses? **YES.***

- c. *Eliminating cash bail, so that no one is held in jail solely for an inability to pay? **YES.***

- d. *Abolishing the death penalty? YES.*
 - e. *Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which has been proven to have significant racial disparities ? YES.*
 - f. *Barring the federal government and state and local jurisdictions from contracting with private corporations to run prisons and detention facilities? YES.*
2. **Prison Conditions.** *In addition to having incarceration rates that far [outpace](#) those of other countries, the US is known for violating both domestic and international law in the conditions of its prisons. Which of the following steps would you support to emphasize the rehabilitative, as opposed to punitive, nature of the system and protect basic rights?*
- a. *Preventing companies from charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services? YES.*
 - b. *Requiring that incarcerated individuals be paid for their work at a rate no lower than the federal minimum wage? YES.*
 - c. *Restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners? YES.*
 - d. *Limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, beyond which it is defined as torture by the United Nations? YES.*
3. **Police Accountability.** *Lax or nonexistent systems of accountability and perverse incentives at the federal, state, and local level, combined with a legacy of systemic racism, too often lead to law enforcement neither enforcing the law nor keeping the public safe. Which of the following steps would you support to promote a more humane, community-focused policing?*
- a. *Prohibiting the transfer of military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement? YES.*
 - b. *Eliminating qualified immunity, which allows law enforcement to violate people's constitutional rights with impunity? YES.*
 - c. *Restricting the use of civil asset forfeiture by police departments and prosecutors' offices? YES.*

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

G. A Humane Immigration System

1. **Comprehensive Immigration Reform.** *The approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US are important contributors to strong economies and strong*

communities. Due to political and economic instability abroad, as well as a labyrinthine and discriminatory immigration bureaucracy at home, this number could very well continue to grow. However, comprehensive immigration reform legislation has remained elusive in Washington. Which of the following policies would you support?

- a. *The DREAM Act, which would allow certain US-raised immigrant youth to earn lawful permanent residence and American citizenship? **YES.***
 - b. *A path for undocumented immigrants to gain US citizenship? **YES.***
 - c. *Repealing the three-year, ten-year, and permanent bars of reentry for undocumented immigrants? **YES.***
 - d. *Decriminalizing border crossing? **YES.***
2. **Upholding Rights, Ending Perverse Incentives.** *Every day, we hear new unconscionable stories about how the US is treating immigrants at the border, fueled by both bad laws and lawlessness at the federal level. Our immigration system should reflect our values. Which of the following policies would you support?*
- a. *Ending the practice of family detention? **YES.***
 - b. *Ending the practice of family separation? **YES.***
 - c. *Ending ICE's daily bed quota? **YES.***
 - d. *Imposing a moratorium on the construction of new detention facilities? **YES.***
 - e. *Abolishing ICE? **YES.***
3. **Ending Mass Deportations.** *Would you support a moratorium on deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform bill is passed?*

BW: YES.

4. **Refugees.** *In October of 2019, the number of refugees resettled in the US hit zero, and the Trump administration would like to keep it that way going forward, abandoning historic humanitarian commitments. What do you see as the appropriate number of refugees for the US to accept each year?*

BW: Due to climate change, we now must consider climate refugees (which has been suggested to total up to 50,000 per year over the next 10 years) in addition to refugees who are fleeing war torn countries, we have to be willing to welcome at least 100,000 per year. Until the effects of climate change can be slowed or reversed, and diplomacy rather than pre-emptive war becomes standard U.S. foreign policy, we must accept our share of

refugees as a humanitarian commitment. Additionally, comprehensive immigration reform must be a priority for our country to allow refugees and immigrants the opportunity to become naturalized American citizens.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

H. A Diverse and Welcoming Society

1. **LGBTQ Rights.** *Over the past several years, we have seen numerous states try to deny trans individuals the right to exist in public spaces as well as conservative lawsuits seeking to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. Would you support legislation to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964?*

BW: YES.

2. **Reparations.** *Would you support legislation to create a commission to study the impact of slavery on the social, political, and economic life of the US and propose appropriate remedies (such as HR40)?*

BW: YES.

3. **Sexual Harassment.** *Would you support legislation to end the use of forced arbitration clauses in sexual harassment cases?*

BW: YES.

4. **Gun Violence Prevention.** *The US has the largest number of guns per capita in the world--and consequently one of the highest rates of gun deaths. For too long, the federal government has refused to play a constructive role in preventing gun violence. Which of the following proposals would you advocate for?*
 - a. *Reinstating the federal assault weapons ban? **YES.***
 - b. *Banning high-capacity magazine ammunitions? **YES.***
 - c. *Requiring a license to purchase a gun? **YES.***
 - d. *Limiting the number of guns an individual can buy to one per month? **YES.***
 - e. *Repealing the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which shields the gun industry from lawsuits? **YES.***

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

I. Good Government and Strong Democracy

1. **Comprehensive Democracy Reform.** *Will you commit to voting on HR 1, the For The People Act, as introduced in 2018? Among other things, HR1 ("For the People Act")*

contains automatic voter registration, Election Day Registration, the expansion of early voting, the prohibition of partisan gerrymandering, and other vital reforms.

BW: YES.

2. **Ending Prison Disenfranchisement**. *Currently, Maine and Vermont are the only states that provide full suffrage to the incarcerated. Do you support ending the disenfranchisement for those currently incarcerated?*

BW: YES.

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

BW: YES.

4. **Campaign Finance -- Part I**. *Do you support public financing of Congressional elections?*

BW: YES.

5. **Campaign Finance -- Part II**. *Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and allow limits on corporate political spending?*

BW: YES.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

J. Sustainable Infrastructure & Environmental Protection

1. **Green New Deal**. *Do you support the concept of a Green New Deal? If so, what should it look like?*

BW: YES.

I fully support the Green New Deal, which not only will de-carbonize our economy, but will account for climate and environmental justice for the communities who will be most affected by the climate crisis. It would immediately halt any investment in fossil fuels (including natural gas) and related infrastructure, and would require transitioning to 100% green renewable energy (no nukes or natural gas) by 2035. The Green New Deal will guarantee full employment and generate up to 20 million new, living-wage jobs, as well as make the government the employer of last resort with a much-needed major public jobs program.

2. **Transitioning to Clean Energy.** *We need to rapidly decarbonize our economy if we are to keep global warming within safe levels. Which of the following policies would you support to accelerate that transition?*
- Setting a goal of 100 percent clean energy generation and use by 2035? **YES.***
 - Putting a price on carbon emissions and investing the revenue in clean energy and green infrastructure? **YES.***
 - Prohibiting new leases for coal, oil, and gas on all federal lands and waters? **YES.***
 - Opposing any legislation that authorizes, or expedites the permitting or approval of, new fossil fuel pipelines? **YES.***

3. **Climate Emergency.** *With rising temperatures and sea levels threatening significant harm to Massachusetts' coast, ecosystems, public health and well-being, do you support declaring a Climate Emergency to drive an aggressive response?*

BW: YES.

4. **Clean Water.** *Would you support legislation to require natural gas drillers to disclose the chemicals that go into the ground during the hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") process and to close the so-called "Halliburton loophole," which prevents the EPA from conducting rigorous oversight?*

BW: YES.

5. **Environmental Justice.** *Would you support legislation to codify environmental justice into law; require federal agencies to address environmental justice through agency actions and permitting decisions; and strengthen legal protections against environmental injustice for communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities?*

BW: YES.

6. **Electric Vehicles.** *Would you support legislation to phase out the sale of gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles by 2030?*

BW: YES.

7. **Public Transportation.** *What would be your top priorities for federal reinvestment in transportation and infrastructure if elected?*

BW: I believe that we must have a \$1 Trillion investment into our infrastructure to rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges. This would coincide with a federal jobs plan, which would guarantee that every American who is able and willing to work would have a job. When we consider the major hurdles to full employment, access to transportation is at the top of the list. We need to improve the accessibility to public transportation

nationwide, and ensure that it is affordable to everyone. This is a doable expectation and must be included in any infrastructure plan.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

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.

BW: Massachusetts is a leader in the tech industry. As a member of Congress with a long career in tech, and by working with local tech stakeholders and those across the country, I would be uniquely qualified to lead the effort to finally secure our technology infrastructure. Our elections must be protected, as well as online privacy, data security, our public works infrastructure, and online information warfare. As our technology becomes more advanced, the need to secure it becomes more paramount. Federal standards and requirements are a necessity, and as a member of Congress, I will be able to implement them based on my expertise and experience.