

# PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

## 2014 LEGISLATIVE RACES QUESTIONNAIRE



### CANDIDATE:

**Ivette Hernandez**

Democrat for State Representative

10th Hampden

**[ivettehernandez.org](http://ivettehernandez.org)**

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### **About the Candidate**

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

I am running for office to continue my work helping families and fighting for my community. I'm a social worker and community activist and have spent the better part of my life fighting for the children and families in my community. My 3 top priorities are investing in quality public education, making sure all of our communities are safe places to live and raise a family and making sure we create good jobs that lift families out of poverty.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I am currently a social worker and have been for almost 17 years. I'm leader in my union SEIU 509 and in my community. I know the struggle that families are going through and I work with them every day. I know through the example of my own life, that when you bring people together, they can accomplish things they never could have alone. I want to bring people together and push for real change on Beacon Hill.

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### **The Issues**

*Our questionnaire is focused on economic justice and inequality, as outlined in our Shared Prosperity Agenda. We are interested in your overall philosophy and approach to the components of the Shared Prosperity Agenda, as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.*

*In each section, the first question seeks your overall view, values, principles and priorities. You do not need to address each item embedded in these first questions; they are suggestions.*

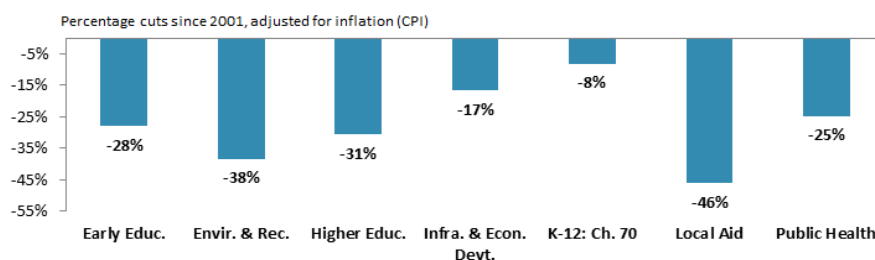
*In each section, the second question asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.*

*Each section features a chart or graph that illustrates one facet of the issue under discussion and is not intended to be comprehensive. All images and data are from Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center ([massbudget.org](http://massbudget.org)).*

### **A. Revenue and Taxation**

Because of income tax cuts and the effects of the recession, Massachusetts has lost nearly \$3 billion in revenue over the last 12 years. We now collect less revenue than 21 other states, and our tax revenue is below the national average. Since 1982, local aid has dropped 58%. Cuts to the moderately progressive state income tax has meant increasing reliance on fees, sales, gas and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressiveness of our revenue. 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 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.***  
**Select cuts across the state budget (FY2001 - FY2012)**



\*Ch. 70 figures are adjusted using the inflation factor specified in Chapter 70

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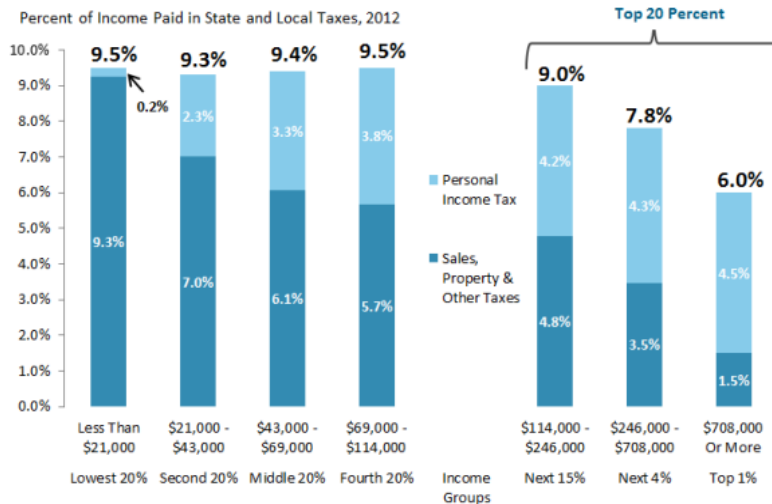
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**Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.**

**Top Earners in Massachusetts Pay Less of Their Personal Income in State and Local Taxes than Do Low Income Earners**



3. What principles do you bring to considerations of state revenue and tax reform (individual and corporate)? *How should we raise more revenue to adequately fund our communities for the future?*

My basic principles are raise enough money that we can truly invest in our communities and don't do it on the backs of working families. Raise the income tax, raise personal exemptions, close corporate loopholes, bring dividends rates to the way they were in the 90's. This would bring in significant revenue and allow us to make the investments we all say we want.

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4. *Optional/As Applicable*: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on revenue and taxation (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

I was very involved in my community with Campaign for Our Communities (CFOC), I lobbied my legislators for An Act to Invest at the State House and at an in-district meeting with outgoing Rep. Coakley-Rivera.

5. **Progressive Taxation.** "An Act to Invest in Our Communities" was designed to raise significant revenue while making our tax code more progressive, but it has not passed the legislature. Would you support a renewed effort to pass this or similar legislation?

Yes

6. **Graduated Income Tax.** Would you support a state constitutional amendment creating a Massachusetts progressive income tax?

Yes

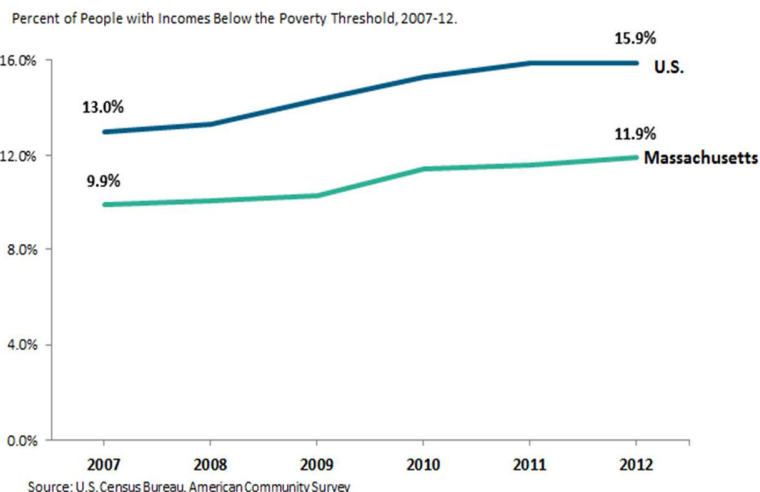
Yes, that's a perfect extension of Raise Up Mass campaign for the future.



## B. Job Growth and the Economy

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. Poverty levels continue to increase, while the minimum wage loses value every year. Massachusetts now ranks 8th in the nation for income inequality.

### Poverty Rates Still Elevated Since Onset of Recession



### The Minimum Wage loses value every year to inflation; it is currently 24% lower than 1968 levels.



- Share your personal values and principles on job growth and the economy.  
*How can we improve the economy and economic security for all people? How do we grow*

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*the number of good paying jobs in the Commonwealth? How do you view wealth and income inequality, and what would you do about it, if anything?*

I strongly believe unions improve both the economy in raising wages but also economic security for workers in their contracts. We need to make major investments in education, public transportation and creating pathways out of poverty. I want us to tax wealth.

8. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on job growth and the economy (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

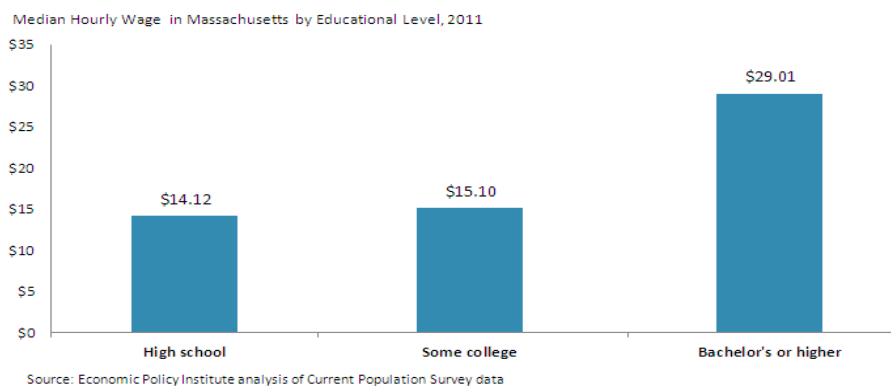
I recently was the MC for the Springfield fight for 15 rally recently and I am on the board at the Western MA Jobs with Justice and my local Central Labor Council



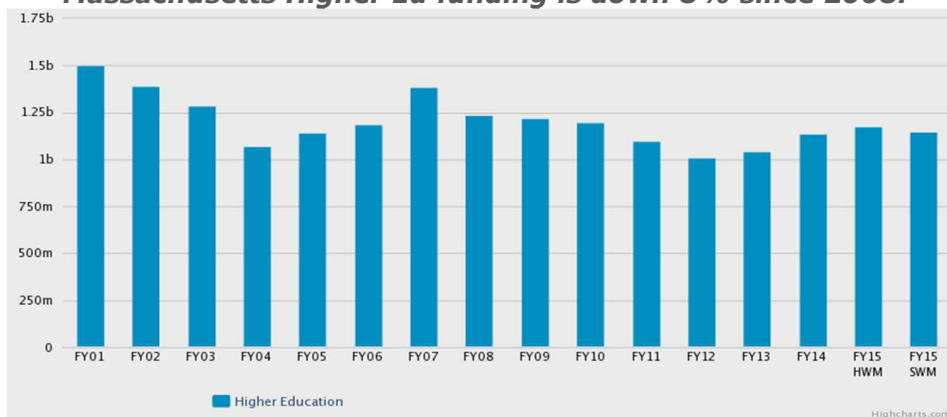
### C. Education and Workforce Development

Public education has always been a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. However, the soaring price of higher education over the last several decades has made access to this opportunity increasingly out of reach, at the very moment when higher education makes a greater difference to one’s economic future. Meanwhile, powerful corporate interests have been steadily undermining public school teachers and unions and siphoning money from our public K-12 system.

#### Wages and Education



#### Massachusetts Higher Ed funding is down 8% since 2008.



9. Please share your personal values and principles regarding public education and workforce training.

*What value does public education and workforce development have in improving our economy as well as in addressing matters of economic justice? What measures should the Commonwealth take on these issues? You might address, for example, charter schools, school vouchers, standardized testing and federal programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.*



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In my role as a social worker I work with families and young mothers now who have little formal education and I know the importance of workforce training in lifting a family out of poverty. On education, I believe we need to completely revamp the curriculum to make sure it fits the lives and reality our children face today. We need longer school days and longer school years. We need smaller class sizes of no more than 15-20 students to a teacher and the resources in the classroom our kids deserve. 2 years of college at a state college or trade school should be of no cost to public school students and the remaining years should be affordable. Our kids should be leaving high school fluent in 3 languages. This all requires major investments, which is why the revenue part is so important.

10. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on education and workforce development (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

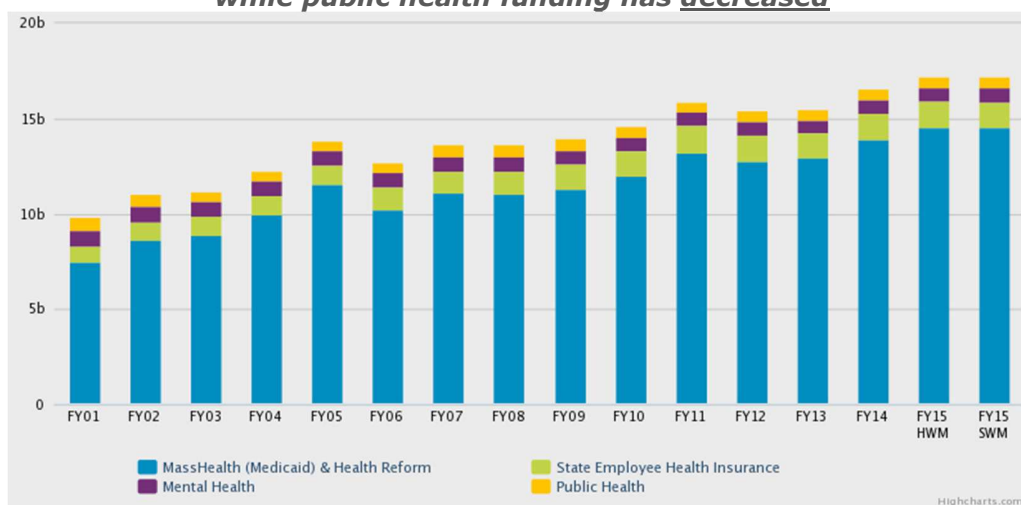
I am the co-founder of a community organization in the North End of Springfield (voces de la comunidad/voices of the community) that originally brought parents together around education



### D. Health Care

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health care insurance coverage. However, we still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, without necessarily achieving better health outcomes. In 2013, 43% of state expenditures were for health care, a number that is rising while other state expenditures are falling. Ultimately, a single payer system will remove complexity - and reduce costs, while providing better and more consistent care to all Massachusetts residents.

**Massachusetts Health Care spending has increased 74% since 2001— while public health funding has decreased**



11. Please share your personal values and principles regarding health care insurance, delivery and outcomes.

In the long term, I support single payer health insurance. In the short term, we need to expand Medicaid, invest in our community hospitals and focus on preventative medicine.

12. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

13. Would you support legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?

Yes

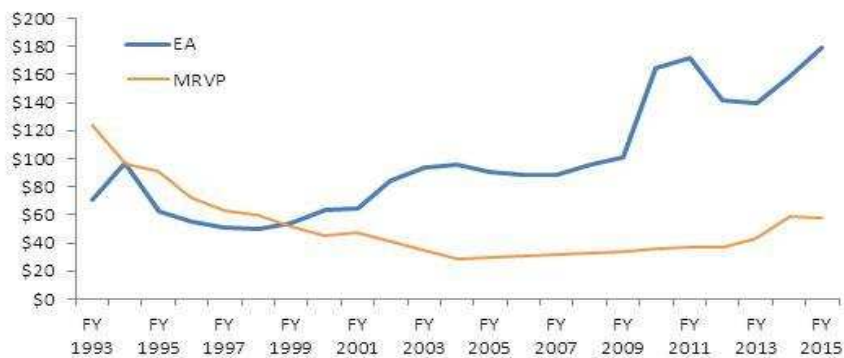


**E. Housing**

Over the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased, federal and state. Currently there is a 10-year waiting list for a rental voucher, and the average rent for a two bedroom apartment requires a wage 50% higher than the median Massachusetts wage. Half of families in Greater Boston alone pay over 30% of their income in housing and utilities costs—and 25% of households pay *more than half* their income to housing. 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.

**Funding for housing vouchers has fallen-- costs for shelter has increased**

(inflation adjusted to 2014 dollars)



Funding for Shelter (EA) and MRVP has moved around since FY 1993. This chart includes funding from the following line items for MRVP: 3222-9024, 3722-9024 & 7004-9024. Line items for EA include: 4403-2100, 4403-2120, 4403-2130, 7004-0101 & 7004-0103.

14. Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing. *How would you ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it, within reasonable distance of job opportunities? How would you address the need to link housing, jobs and transportation? How would you tackle homelessness?*

I know first hand what it is like to be homeless and worse with children. It was having access to shelters and eventually affordable housing that I was able to provide stable housing for my family and could focus on my education. Families in shelters need childcare, workforce training and access to reliable and affordable public transportation. This sets us up to have a fighting chance at breaking the cycle of poverty hurting our families.

15. *Optional/As Applicable:* Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc).

This is the work I do every day both as a social worker and as a leader in my community.

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**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 feel we share the same values and have a similar vision for the world and I want to work with you and need your help to win this!