

# PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS

## 2014 LEGISLATIVE RACES QUESTIONNAIRE



### CANDIDATE:

**Aikaterini Panagiotakis Koudanis**

Democrat for State Representative

11th Essex

**Katerina.info**

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OFFICE: State Representative, 11th Essex

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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'm running to fight corruption and bring balance to improve the quality of life for everyone.

1. Improve & fix Open Government: Open Meeting laws improve, transparency.
2. Improving Infrastructure with improving economy and building green at same time
3. Education and Environmental

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I am a fighter, and a big community activist.

I know how to organize the community with other activists and fight for a common cause to make the right kind of changes to better the community, and not a few special interest groups that have targeted our politicians.

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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.*

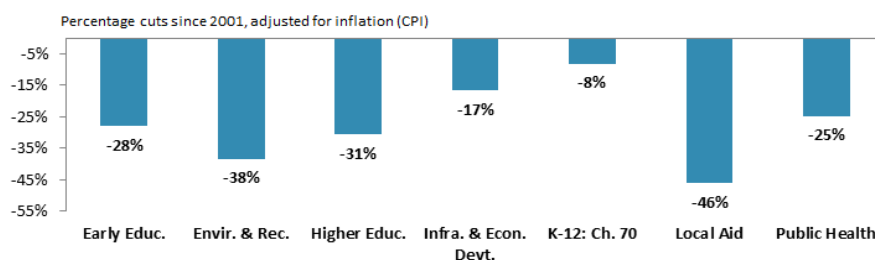
*In each section, the second question asks about your advocacy experience; you may leave it blank if appropriate—we do not expect candidates to have a record on every issue. Current or former elected officials: please outline your leadership roles, as opposed to simply your voting record.*

*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)**

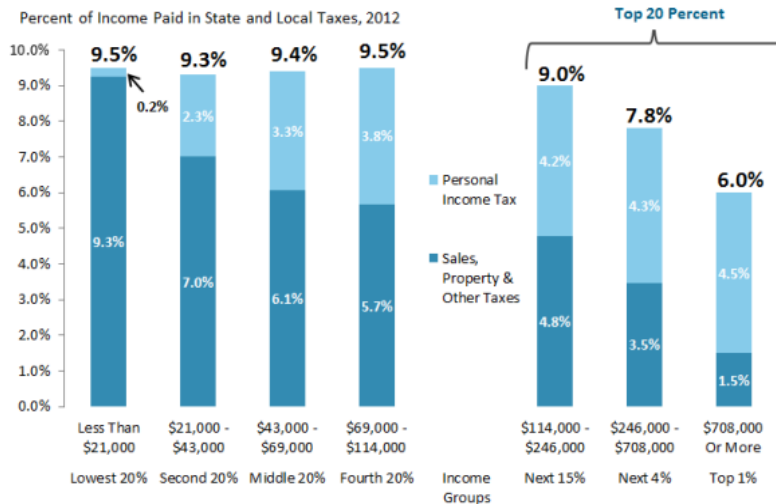


\*Ch. 70 figures are adjusted using the inflation factor specified in Chapter 70



**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?*

By lifting the corporate tax caps, ending corporate loop holes, and removing entitlements and high salaries from over compensated politicians.

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 have spoken in public hearings in opposition of initiatives or budget plans that are selfishly self centered to benefit special interests.

I have initiated a few petitions online on change.org asking for more transparency in government to publish meeting agendas, and minutes in summary on line with other public information ie. procurement information to better inform and involve the public.

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.

Similar legislation would be for a Progressive Tax on Corporations that do not benefit the community, which take a higher unfair revenue from the community.

A progressive tax rate on income tax would have to be done by a ballot initiative, which the voters would have to approve.

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

Yes

As stated in the previous question, if the people vote for this on the ballot, and to look at measures first of unfair corporate competition.

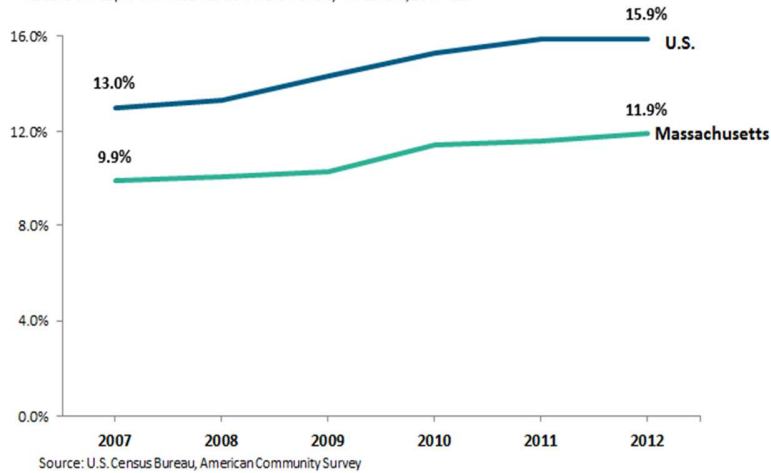


**B. Job Growth and the Economy**

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**

Percent of People with Incomes Below the Poverty Threshold, 2007-12.



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

MA minimum wage, 2014 \$s



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7. 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 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?*

We need to stop focusing on economic growth from the Real Estate Development and Big Box business, and look more towards smaller but many models of business to manufacturing. It does not make sense major cities in the Commonwealth are replacing factory and commercial sites to residential and creating a dead end economic structure with temporary construction jobs.

My idea would be to invest in infrastructure first, to improve public systems and create jobs (by also fixing government procurement process).. by having these jobs fairly open to equal opportunity to each local district as a sub contract and take away top heavy profiteering off government jobs. To have accountability in the system.

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 have initiated a few petitions to fix the issues with government procurement.

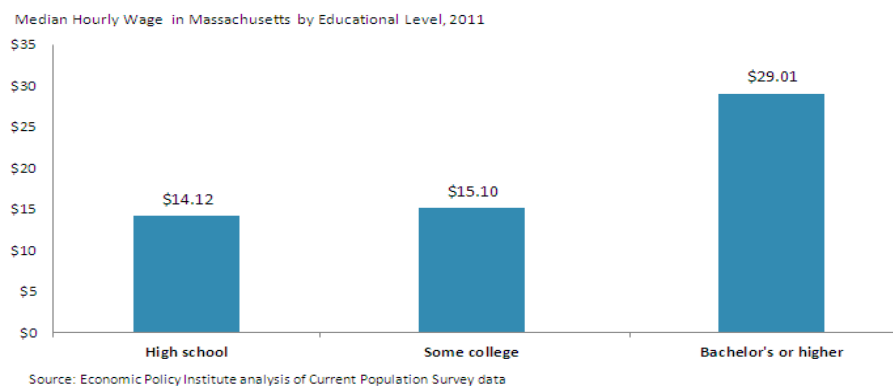
As an architectural and site planning designer, at times I have drawn ideas pro-bono to share thoughts and advocate in improving our infrastructure first.



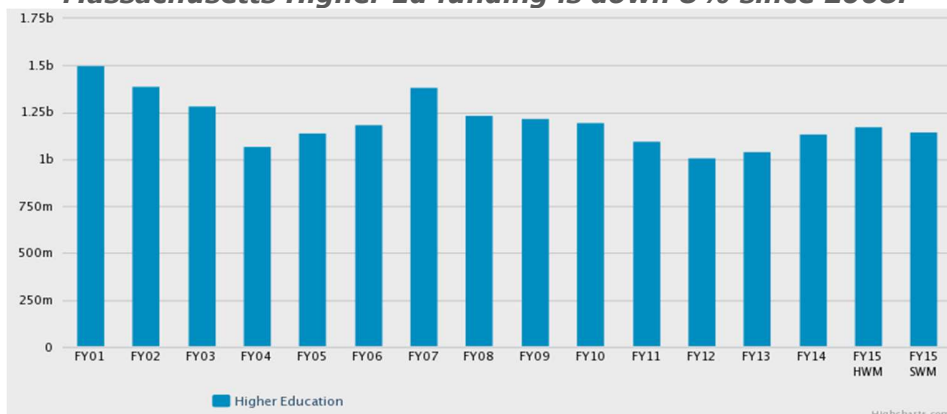
### C. Education and Workforce Development

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,*



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*school vouchers, standardized testing and federal programs like No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.*

In a free country, the choice of education should be open. There are not enough choices in public education for families to customize their student's learning, and at the same time a teacher's creative ability to work within this type of creativity. I do not believe in strict standardization. With large student populations, a survey should be conducted to see which optional classes could be made available, so that the course of education grows with the times.

With this, I believe more in public Innovation Schools (as public charter schools), providing freedom and choice in education.

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).

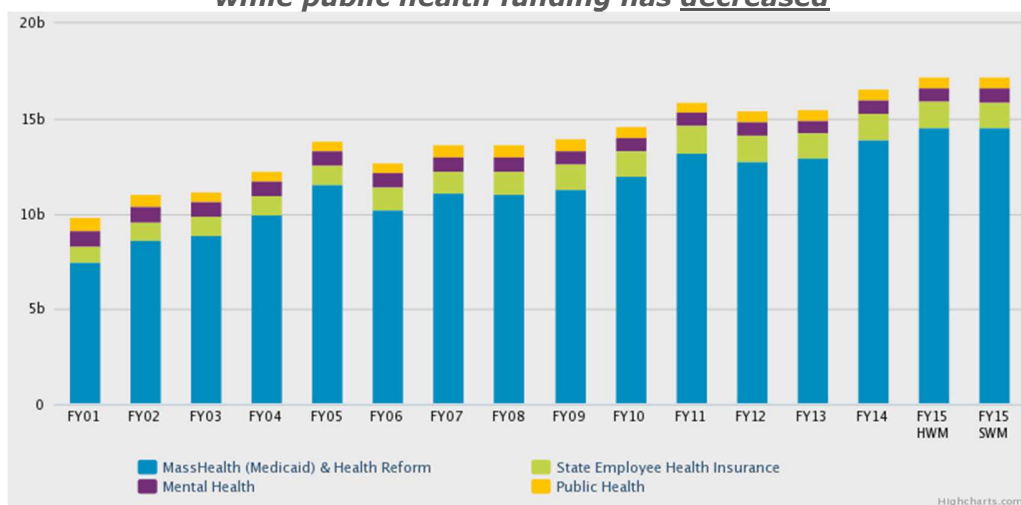
I have initiate a petition to survey teachers in the local district, if any would be interested in transforming and existing school into an innovation school.



### 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.

The first problem with health care is the giant problem of near anti-competitive operations. We need to bring back public community hospitals, where the community defines the purpose of the hospital services, and add restrictions on board members compensation.

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

I am the organizer of a grassroots movement to save NSMC Union Hospital in Lynn, an working to reinstate the principles of a community hospital. In this battle, I have submitted a complaint to federal agencies to address the issues.

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

Yes. I believe everyone should have access to health care as everyone has access to education and roads. Health is a number one priority.

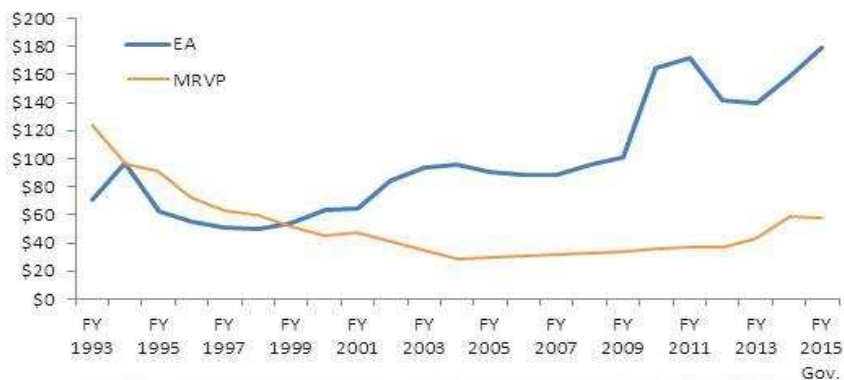


**E. Housing**

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?*

There are a couple ways to tackle the issue locally. One is with looking at cities with high tax levies over a certain percentage of the household medium income. In order to preserve such a community and not drive more into homelessness, I would promote a regulation over expenditures to ensure budgetary measures are considered for senior, veteran and graduate student housing, which is the biggest issue in my district.

Another way to provide benefits for affordable housing, is by fixing the broken system with corporate taxes, for corporations which do not benefit the community.

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

I have spoken in public hearing in support of the Homeowners Bill of Rights.

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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 have helped others fight substance abuse and find a way onto treatment. I know the trials of what works and what doesn't work, and I understand the faults in the system which do not help people move forward. I want to fix the faults in the system, and work with health centers to provide the right treatment to heal, not the profiteering kind.