



2025 Municipal Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Celina Reyes

Office Sought: Lawrence City Council – Councilor At-Large

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(A) Your Candidacy

1. What would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

1. Neighborhood Safety and Quality of Life – I will continue working to expand community policing, improve lighting, and invest in safe public spaces.
2. Affordable Housing and Family Support – I will protect tenants, support renters and homeowners, and ensure families have stability.
3. Education and Leadership Development – I will strengthen schools, afterschool programs, and youth leadership opportunities.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I bring over two decades of experience as a small business owner, child care provider, and community organizer. As a three-term Councilor At-Large, I have a proven record of listening to residents, building coalitions, and delivering results on safety, housing, and education. My background as a union leader and nonprofit founder has given me the tools to advocate effectively for working families.

In Lawrence, we are fortunate to already have fare-free public transit, which I strongly support as a way to expand access to work, school, and healthcare. I have also consistently advocated for vouchers for working families to help them afford child care and basic needs. In addition, I developed an ordinance that ensures Family Child Care educators have designated safety signage for pick-up and drop-off of children, giving families greater peace of mind and improving safety in our neighborhoods.

3. What is the one policy you've seen pioneered in another city that you'd most like to adopt locally?

I admire how other municipalities have strengthened their partnerships with community-based safety response programs. I would like to see Lawrence expand on similar approaches, ensuring that residents can rely on both professional services and grassroots initiatives to address public safety, housing stability, and health equity.

(B) Open-Ended Policy Questions

1. Given state law, municipalities in Massachusetts are limited in their taxing power. What opportunities do you see for the city to raise revenue to support essential city services?

I believe we must pursue creative solutions like home rule petitions for progressive revenue sources, including transfer fees on high-end real estate transactions, as well as aggressively pursuing state and federal grants. We can also strengthen public-private partnerships to invest in infrastructure, housing, and workforce development.

2. What are your top priorities for ensuring that all students in your city can receive a high-quality public education?

I support investments in school infrastructure, teacher retention, bilingual education, and mental health services. Strong partnerships with parents and community organizations are essential, and we must ensure equitable funding for schools that serve our most vulnerable students.

As a Councilor, I successfully advocated for funds to renovate and rebuild two major schools in District B: the Oliver and Leahy Schools. Today, our children are beginning the school year in two modern facilities, each with the capacity to serve 1,000 students. These projects represent not only an investment in

safe, high-quality learning environments, but also a commitment to equity and opportunity for every family in Lawrence.

3. What can your city do to help protect immigrant communities under attack from ICE and ensure genuine community safety?

Lawrence must remain a safe and welcoming city. I support policies that prevent local agencies from cooperating with ICE, ensure hospitals and schools are safe zones, and provide resources for immigrant families to access legal aid, housing, and healthcare without fear.

4. What are your top three policy priorities for making your city climate-resilient, and how would you ensure that equity is at the center of any such efforts?

1. Expand access to green and resilient infrastructure, such as tree planting and flood protection.
2. Promote renewable energy use in public buildings and incentivize energy-efficient housing.
3. Ensure environmental justice by focusing on neighborhoods most affected by heat, flooding, and pollution.

5. What steps would you take to reduce dependence on cars and better facilitate the ability of city residents to safely get around by walking, biking, or public transit?

I support expanding protected bike lanes, improving sidewalks and crosswalks, and advocating for more frequent and fare-free public transit. Equity must be central so all neighborhoods benefit from safe, accessible alternatives to car travel.

6. What policies will you advocate for to ensure that your city can be a place that is affordable for residents to live at any stage of life?

I support expanding affordable housing production, preserving existing affordable units, protecting tenants from unjust evictions, and providing support for seniors to age in place. I also back a home rule petition for local rent stabilization.

7. [If relevant] How would you assess your city's MBTA Communities Act rezoning efforts so far?

Lawrence must meet its obligations under the Act, but we must do so in a way that reflects community needs, preserves affordability, and prevents displacement.

8. What strategies would you employ to resist federal overreach from the Trump Administration while protecting critical services and funding for residents?

I would work with state and local partners to safeguard immigrant protections, healthcare access, and federal funds for housing and education. I will stand firmly against attempts to criminalize immigrants, restrict reproductive rights, or roll back civil rights.

9. How would you model transparency and accountability if elected?

I will continue to hold regular community meetings, maintain open communication through social media, and share clear updates on city budgets, projects, and policies. Accountability means being visible, accessible, and responsive to residents.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES**
2. Do you support the creation of an unarmed, community-based emergency response program, separate from the Police Department, to respond to mental and behavioral health crises? **YES**
3. If your community has not already, do you support adopting the new specialized stretch code, which would require new construction and major renovations to be built to a very high-efficiency standard with all-electric (as opposed to fossil fuel) heating and cooling systems? **YES**
4. Do you support fare-free public transit? **YES**
5. Do you support the expansion of the network of permanent, protected bike lanes in your city? **YES**
6. Would you support a home rule petition to establish a small transfer fee on high-end real estate transactions to create dedicated funding for affordable housing production and preservation? **YES**

7. Would you support a home rule petition to enable the city to stabilize rents?
YES
8. According to the American Library Association, in 2022 there were at least 45 attempts to restrict access to books in MA schools, disproportionately books that speak to the experiences of LGBTQ students and students of color. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES**

(D) Additional Comments

(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)

Lawrence is a city full of resilience, diversity, and potential. I am running for re-election to continue fighting for safe neighborhoods, affordable housing, high-quality education, and equity in every policy decision. As a mother, grandmother, small business owner, and long-time community leader, I understand the struggles families face—and I will continue to be a voice for working people, immigrants, and those too often left behind. Together, we can build a stronger, safer, and more inclusive Lawrence.