



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2026 Governor's Council
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Mara Dolan

Office Sought: Governor's Council, District 3

Party: Democrat

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A. Questions about Your Candidacy & Platform

1. Why are you running for Governor's Council? What has drawn you to this office in particular?

I am seeking re-election after running to be the first public defender on the Governor's Council.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I have been working in our courts for over 20 years and am very knowledgeable about the legal, administrative, and cultural issues playing out in courts, and the critically important role judges play in all those issues.

3. What factors do/will you consider when determining whether an individual should be confirmed as a judge, a member of the Parole Board, or a member of any of the other boards and positions considered by the Council? How much weight/importance do you give to each of the factors you consider? Do you have any litmus tests?

I have represented incarcerated people to help them prepare for their Parole Board hearings. I am extremely concerned about wrongful denial of parole, and how concerns for public safety can result in keeping people incarcerated even after they have paid their debt to society, pose no danger to public safety, and could be contributing to their communities and reunited with family and loved ones. I spoke out about this recently when I voted no on a Parole Board member partly due to his failure to address the issue of wrongful denial of parole.

4. What issues do you intend to prioritize during questioning in confirmation hearings?

My top concern is always equal justice under the law, as provided by the United States Constitution and the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. Every nominee I speak with must demonstrate that they have a history of treating everyone equally regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or any other category used to divide.

5. What role can the Governor's Council play in helping to end mass incarceration in Massachusetts?

The Governor's Council can make sure that all incoming judges will not impose excessive sentences. Judges have to follow sentencing guidelines, but those generally provide a lot of judicial discretion. I do not believe that punishment works. I believe there are much better ways to rehabilitate and prevent repeat offenses.

- 6. As a (current or future) member of the Governor's Council, will you commit to ensuring that the judges you confirm will uphold free speech protections at both public and private universities? Explain how your understanding of freedom of speech informs your judicial nominations.**

I have long said that freedom of speech is our most important right. It is also guaranteed under the United States Constitution and the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights. Article 16 states simply, "The right of free speech shall not be abridged." All judicial nominees must demonstrate that they will uphold the U.S. Constitution and the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights.

- 7. To what extent do you intend to participate in the *recruitment of demographically and professionally diverse candidates to apply for positions on the various boards under the Governor's Council's purview?***

I am regularly in court seeing other attorneys work and have had many discussions with attorneys I thought would be good judicial candidates. I also speak regularly with colleagues about whether they know of good people who might be interested in applying to be a judge. I look for experience, character, and diversity. I have recruited people to apply and have seen them all the way through the confirmation process. I will continue to do that as well as have information sessions for people who are interested in becoming a judge.

- 8. Many people are unaware of the existence of the Governor's Council. How will you seek to increase transparency and civic engagement if elected?**

I have made education about the Governor's Council an important part of my campaign as well as my work as a Councillor. I continue to speak with people throughout my district outside typical political gathering spaces to do just that. I made a point of collecting signatures at commuter rail stations and in front of grocery stores because I wanted to help inform people about the Governor's Council as well as hear from constituents I hadn't reached yet to learn about their concerns. I have used social media and emails extensively to keep people informed about the work of the Governor's Council and have made many media appearances, including on Boston Public Radio and NBC Boston to speak about the work of the Governor's Council.

9. *(If a challenger or a candidate for an open seat)* How would you describe yourself as similar to or different from the current officeholder?

B. Yes/No Questions

1. **Reproductive Justice - I.** Young people under sixteen seeking an abortion must obtain parental consent or judicial authorization. While most young people involve their parents, many cannot, causing delays to timely medical care and counseling. Scared teens may also turn to dangerous measures: going out of state or risking their lives and health with illegal or self-induced abortion. Would you support repealing this

restriction on young people's access to abortion? **YES**

2. **Reproductive Justice -- II.** With the overturning of Roe v. Wade, states are more important than ever as bulwarks of reproductive rights. Would you commit to voting against any judicial nominees with anti-abortion records? **YES**
3. **Police Accountability.** The 2020 police accountability legislation passed by the Massachusetts Legislature contained a number of steps forward, but important measures were left out. Would you support legislation to do the following?
 - a. Eliminating qualified immunity for state and local police and correctional officers so that individuals whose constitutional rights are violated can have their fair day in court? **YES**
 - b. Enacting the recommendations from the special legislative commission on facial recognition, to implement privacy, civil rights, and due process protections to govern police use of the technology? **YES**
4. **Sentencing Reform.** The 2018 criminal justice reform bill was an important first step in reducing mass incarceration. However, in our "liberal" state, incarceration rates remain much higher than they are in other countries, and sentencing laws can be even more punitive than those in states viewed as conservative. Do you support the following reforms?
 - a. Eliminating mandatory minimums for all drug offenses? **YES**
 - b. Raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21, in line with research that shows that young offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to reoffend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood? **YES**
 - c. Decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adolescents, by creating an exception to the statutory rape law for youth [close in age](#)? **That is, in my opinion, a more complicated issue than it appears. Creating an exception may mean that someone who rapes a minor may elude conviction by using the standard defense to rape that the victim consented. So while in theory I support this, I am concerned about practical ramifications. I am open to learning more about the issue.**
 - d. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application? **YES**
5. **Clean Slate.** The Massachusetts court system maintains a database of name-based court arraignment records, referred to as Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI). Many people are trapped in poverty and shut out of jobs and housing because of the difficult process to expunge their records, even for cases that did not end in a conviction or occurred when they were teenagers. Would you support...
 - a. Requiring the Commissioner of Probation to automatically seal criminal and juvenile records after the applicable waiting periods without requiring individuals to file a petition to do so? **YES**
 - b. Requiring the immediate sealing of a criminal offense if the charge did not end in a conviction? **YES**

6. **Solitary Confinement.** Would you support legislation to create universal access to productive out of cell time with programming, education and vocational training for all incarcerated people? **YES**
7. **Prison Moratorium.** Would you support a moratorium on the construction of new prisons and jails in the Commonwealth? **YES**
8. **Prison Accountability.** Governor's Councilors have the statutory right to make unannounced visits to correctional facilities run by the state. Would you commit to exercising this right in order to improve accountability for the Department of Corrections? If an incumbent, are you already doing this? **YES. I am already doing this, and have visited Souza-Baranowski maximum security prison on a Governor's Council visit. I spoke with incarcerated people and asked them, in the presence of guards, whether they were being treated right. Of course they all said yes, but the guards knew exactly what I was getting at. It was incredibly empowering.**
9. **Labor.** Will you commit to consulting with labor unions before considering a nominee for the board of industrial accidents? If an incumbent, are you already doing this? **YES. YES. I have had a lot of labor union support and will be announcing more labor union endorsements. For all Industrial Accident Board nominees, I have ensured that they will vigorously support workers rights.**

C. Voting Record

The Governor's Council is often unanimous in its votes, but there have been several split votes in recent terms. If an incumbent, why did you vote the way you did? If a challenger or not yet elected for the vote, how would you have voted?

- Vincent DeMore for Parole Board (2026)

I voted no for a number of reasons, including his lack of mental health experience. But my biggest concern was his failure to address the issue of wrongful denial of parole. As stated above, I am very well aware that many people are incarcerated who do not pose a danger, who have paid their debt to society, and who could be contributing to their communities and reunited with family and loved ones. It is essential that those folks be paroled. Unless a nominee for Parole Board demonstrates that they will support parole for those folks, I will always vote no.

- Mary M. Ferriter for Probate & Family Court judge (2026)

I ran to be the first public defender on the Governor's Council. But after hearing from both fathers groups who told me that our family courts discriminate against men, and mothers groups who told me that our family courts discriminate against women, and seeing that no other Governor's Councilor was working in our Probate and Family Courts, I expanded my family law practice so that I could see for myself. The experience has been invaluable and given me a very clear view of how our Probate and Family Courts work, as well as deepened my understanding of the law. As someone who is painfully familiar with coercive control and who has been very afraid

of a partner, I am extremely concerned about how victims of domestic abuse are treated in our courts. Mary Ferriter is an exceptionally experienced, insightful, and compassionate public servant. I heard from many people who opposed the nomination and from many people who supported it. I met personally with the nominee and had several follow up calls. Most of the people who opposed the nomination had no personal experience of the nominee.. After an extremely thorough vetting process I was fully confident that the nominee would serve with distinction in all ways, upholding the Constitutional protections of due process and equal protection, following the legal standard in custody cases of the best interest of the child, recognizing coercive control, treating victims of domestic abuse and coercive control, women and men alike, with sensitivity and respect, and upholding the law to protect victims.

- Gabrielle Wolohojian for Supreme Judicial Court (2024) – not in office
- Gloriann Moroney for District Court (2022) – not in office
- Michael Callahan for District Court (2022) – not in office
- Claudine Coutier for Superior Court (2022) – not in office