



PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2026 Governor's Council
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate: Tamisha L. Civil

Office Sought: Governor's Council, District 2

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'm running for Governor's Council because I believe the people of Massachusetts deserve a justice system that is fair, accountable, and accessible to everyone. My commitment to this work is deeply personal. Watching my cousin spend 27 years in prison for a crime he did not commit showed me how profoundly judicial decisions can impact individuals, families, and entire communities.

Throughout my career as a probation officer, victim-witness advocate, and domestic violence advocate, I have worked alongside people navigating some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Those experiences have given me a firsthand understanding of the importance of having qualified, compassionate, and impartial judges on the bench.

The Governor's Council plays a critical role in reviewing judicial nominations, and I sought this position to help ensure that our courts reflect the values of fairness, integrity, and equal justice under the law. I am committed to evaluating nominees thoughtfully, supporting a judiciary that protects the rights of all residents, and bringing diverse perspectives and lived experiences to the decision-making process.

My goal is to help build greater trust in our courts and ensure that the justice system works for every community across Massachusetts.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

My career in the justice system as a probation officer, victim-witness advocate, and domestic violence advocate gave me a firsthand understanding of how courts impact people's lives. I have worked with victims seeking justice, families navigating the legal system, and individuals trying to rebuild their lives. Combined with my education, community leadership experience, and the personal experience of seeing a loved one wrongfully convicted, these experiences prepared me to evaluate judicial nominees thoughtfully and serve effectively on the Governor's Council.

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?

When evaluating a nominee for a judgeship, the Parole Board, or any other position that comes before the Governor's Council, I look first at the

individual's qualifications, experience, and record of public service. For judicial nominees, I consider their legal background, years of practice, temperament, ethics, judicial philosophy, adherence to the law, impartiality, respect for the rule of law, and any prior rulings or professional conduct that may help illuminate how they would serve on the bench.

For Parole Board nominees, I evaluate their expertise in criminal justice, understanding of parole laws and processes, commitment to public safety, knowledge of rehabilitation and reentry, ability to make fair and impartial decisions, ethical standards, communication skills, and capacity to balance the interests of victims, offenders, and the broader community.

I do not assign a specific numerical weight to each factor. Rather, I consider the totality of a nominee's qualifications, experience, judgment, and character. These positions carry enormous responsibility and have a profound impact on people's lives, so every aspect of a nominee's record deserves careful review.

I do not have any litmus tests. My focus is on whether a nominee possesses the experience, integrity, fairness, and judgment necessary to serve the people of Massachusetts effectively and impartially.

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

Community effectiveness: What experience, knowledge, and community services have they provided that have prepared them to serve effectively in this role as a judge, parole board member or a clerk magistrate.

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

One of the most effective ways the Council can help address mass incarceration is by ensuring that qualified, fair, and impartial individuals are appointed to these positions. Judges make decisions every day that affect pretrial detention, sentencing, diversion programs, treatment alternatives, and rehabilitation opportunities. Parole Board members make decisions that impact reentry and second chances for individuals who have demonstrated rehabilitation.

As a Councilor, I would carefully evaluate nominees to ensure they understand the importance of balancing public safety with fairness, accountability, rehabilitation, and evidence-based approaches to justice. I believe we should support a justice system that reduces unnecessary incarceration, addresses the root causes of crime, expands access to treatment and services, and promotes successful reentry into the community.

My personal and professional experiences have shown me that justice is not simply about punishment, it is also about ensuring that people are treated fairly, that victims are supported, and that opportunities for rehabilitation and redemption exist when appropriate. Through its appointment powers, the Governor's Council can help shape a judiciary and parole system that advances those goals while maintaining public safety.

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.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental constitutional right and an essential part of a healthy democracy. My understanding of free speech is grounded in the principle that individuals should be able to express their views, engage in debate, and participate in civic life without fear of government censorship or retaliation, while also recognizing that courts must apply the law and constitutional protections as they exist.

As a member of the Governor's Council, my role is not to require judges to reach particular outcomes on specific issues. Rather, it is to evaluate whether nominees possess the qualifications, integrity, impartiality, temperament, and commitment to the rule of law necessary to serve fairly and independently.

When considering judicial nominees, I would examine their record, legal experience, ethical standards, and demonstrated respect for constitutional rights, including the freedoms protected by the First Amendment. I believe judges must be capable of applying the law fairly regardless of their personal views and must be committed to protecting the constitutional rights of all individuals.

With respect to public and private universities, questions involving free speech often raise complex legal issues that depend on constitutional provisions, statutory law, institutional policies, and specific facts. My responsibility would be to confirm judges who have the judgment, independence, and legal expertise to fairly resolve those issues in accordance with the law.

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 intend to be actively engaged in encouraging qualified candidates from a wide range of demographic, geographic, and professional backgrounds to apply for positions that come before the Governor's Council. A judiciary and public service system that reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth

strengthens public confidence in government and brings valuable perspectives to decision-making.

Diversity should be understood broadly. It includes race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, socioeconomic background, geography, and life experience, as well as professional diversity. Individuals with backgrounds in public defense, prosecution, civil litigation, legal services, academia, government, community advocacy, law enforcement, social services, and other fields each bring important perspectives that can enhance the quality of public institutions.

While the Governor's Council does not directly appoint candidates, Councilors can use their visibility, relationships, and community networks to encourage talented individuals who may not have traditionally viewed themselves as candidates for these roles to pursue opportunities for public service. I would work to ensure that recruitment efforts reach communities across the Commonwealth and that qualified applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds are aware of and encouraged to seek these positions.

At the same time, my ultimate responsibility is to evaluate nominees based on their qualifications, integrity, experience, judgment, and ability to serve the public effectively. My goal is to help foster a strong and diverse pool of candidates while maintaining high standards of excellence for every appointment.

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?

As the current member of the Governor's Council, I make it a priority to be present and engaged in the community I represent. I attend community events, meetings, and public forums because I believe that effective representation requires showing up, listening directly to constituents, and being accessible to the people I serve.

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](#)? **YES**
 - 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? **YES** If an incumbent, are you already doing this? **YES**
9. **Labor.** Will you commit to consulting with labor unions before considering a nominee for the board of industrial accidents? **YES** If an incumbent, are you already doing this? **YES**

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)

Lately, we've seen a troubling disregard for the value of life violence impacting children, women, and communities at large. Throughout my career with the District Attorney's Office and the Massachusetts Probation Department, I never viewed myself simply as part of law enforcement. I saw my role as bridging the gap protecting victims while also advocating for fairness within our justice system.

Everyday, I worked to support victims, ensuring their voices were heard and their safety prioritized. At the same time, I stood up for individuals who deserved a fair hearing, especially those who may have been wrongfully convicted, as I experienced within my own family. To me, that is what true balance looks like.

That's why I voted yes for Mr. Demore to be on the parole board, he brings both prosecutorial and defense experience. This kind of perspective matters. It reflects an understanding of not only how to hold people accountable, but also how to recognize when the system must be fair, measured, and just.

I don't claim that every decision I make as a Councillor is perfect. But I do believe my constituents expect and deserve leaders like myself who understand the realities of trauma, especially those who never recover from it, who can see the full picture, and who act in the best interest of both victims and those who are falsely imprisoned navigating the justice system.

Someone who has served as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney brings a rare and valuable perspective to the justice system. They understand the importance of public safety, due process, the realities victims face, and the challenges defendants encounter such as seeking parole. That balanced experience is especially important in high-stakes parole decisions, where the responsibility is to carefully weigh rehabilitation, accountability, and the potential risk to the community.

There are decisions we make as leaders that others may not fully understand, but that should never silence our commitment to advocating for those impacted by injustices within the criminal justice system. I want to make sure what happened in Cambridge doesn't happen again under my watch as a Governor's Councillor.

- Mary M. Ferriter for Probate & Family Court judge (2026) (**not present for voting**)
- Gabrielle Wolohojian for Supreme Judicial Court (2024) (**not elected yet**)
- Gloriann Moroney for District Court (2022) (**not elected yet**)
- Michael Callahan for District Court (2022) (**not elected yet**)
- Claudine Coutier for Superior Court (2022) (**not elected yet**)