

*Benjamin Bloomenthal*

**14th Middlesex**

**State Representative**

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*Endorsement Questionnaire*

**Office Sought:** State Representative

**Legislative District:** 14th Middlesex

**Party:** Democratic

**Website:** [www.bloomenthal.org](http://www.bloomenthal.org)

**Twitter:** [@BloomyCommittee](https://twitter.com/BloomyCommittee)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/BloomyForYou/>



**Primary:** September 4

**Election:** November 6

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# Introduction: Progressive Mass

## About

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*Progressive Massachusetts is a statewide, grassroots organization committed to working toward shared prosperity, racial and social justice, good government and strong democracy, and sustainable infrastructure and environmental protection. It was founded 5 years ago by local organizers from the Patrick and Obama campaigns in order to continue to move forward progressive values and issues in Massachusetts.*

*Advancing a progressive agenda in Massachusetts requires electing legislators who share--and will fight for--our values, and then holding them accountable.*

### Membership

One of the benefits of being a dues-paying member of Progressive Massachusetts is that you get to participate in our endorsement votes for key elections, helping to shape the future direction of progressive policymaking in the state. **Not yet a member? Join!** [ProgressiveMass.com/member](https://ProgressiveMass.com/member)

### How Endorsements Work

Progressive Massachusetts sends candidates this detailed policy questionnaire, revised periodically by the Elections & Endorsements Committee (EEC). The EEC may choose to make a recommendation in a given race, but the ultimate decision lies with you--the members. In each race, you can choose to vote for a **candidate**, vote “**no endorsement**,” or **abstain**. Candidates who receive at least 60% of all ballots submitted in their respective race will be endorsed by Progressive Massachusetts. If no candidate in a race reaches the 60% threshold, we will not endorse. Regardless of whether or not we endorse, all questionnaires will be made available on our website as a public service.

## Sources

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*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](https://massbudget.org)).*

# I. About the Candidate

## Benjamin Bloomenthal

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

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** As a lifelong progressive, I believe there is a window of opportunity to advance a progressive platform in the Massachusetts Legislature. Currently the Massachusetts House is far from progressive and with the retirement of my State Representative, I see an opportunity to create change in the House. As a result, I am running on a platform advocating Single Payer Healthcare, Education Reform and Labor Support.

*2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?*

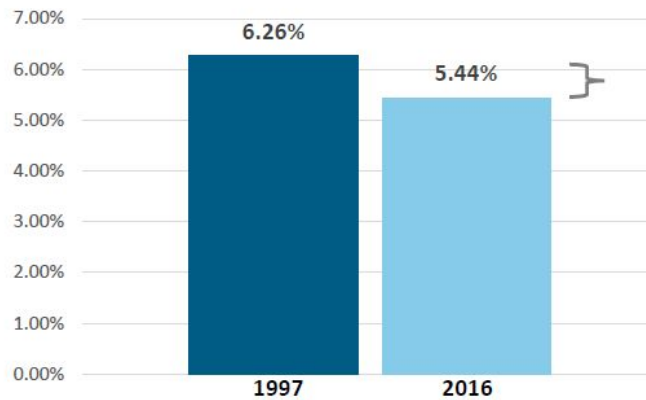
**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Currently, I am the only candidate running, in the 14th Middlesex District, with nearly twenty years of direct state government experience. In addition, I have earned my MBA in Health Care Policy and Finance from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University. Therefore, I believe that I am prepared to serve as a legislator, based on my academic and career achievements.

# A. REVENUE AND TAXATION

Despite the label of “Taxachusetts,” Massachusetts ranks 22nd among states in terms of state and local taxes as a share of total personal income and below the national average. Between 1977 and 2012, Massachusetts reduced state taxes by more than all but one other state. Because of income tax cuts enacted between 1998 and 2002, Massachusetts is losing over \$3 billion in tax revenue each year. Such cuts to the state income tax have meant increasing reliance on fees, as well as sales, gas, and property taxes, exacerbating the overall regressivity of the system. 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.

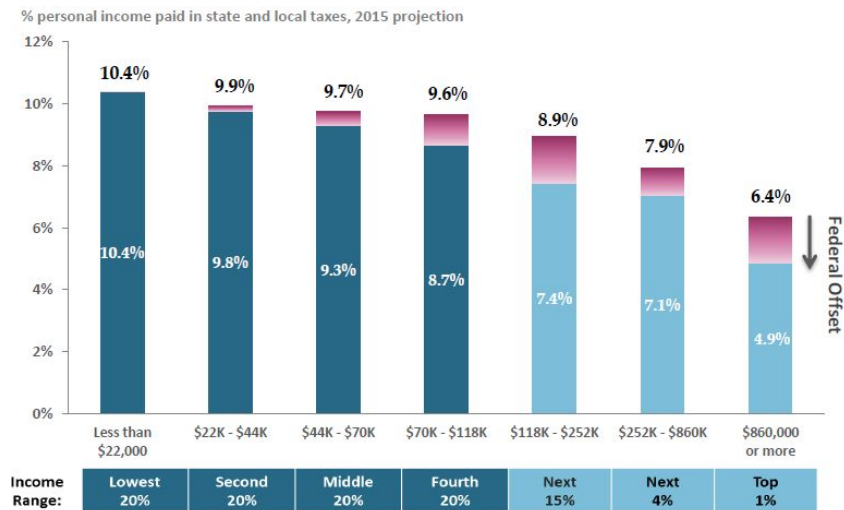
**Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.**

Massachusetts tax revenue as a share of the state economy



This 13.1% decline in tax revenue has led to deep budget cuts and ongoing budget challenges.

## Massachusetts state and local taxes are regressive.



\* Percentages shown inside bar are net effective tax levels after factoring in federal offset. Percentages above bars show tax levels before federal offset.

Source: Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.

1. *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?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Having worked in the Office of the State Auditor for a decade, I understand the importance a robust tax system has on services state-wide. However, due to the nature of the regressive tax system in place, and also the cuts to the income tax – I have seen over the past 20 years a reduction in revenues for education, transportation and healthcare. Therefore, I am in support of closing corporate tax-loopholes for large companies and restoring the income tax to at least 5.25%, in order restore lost tax revenue.

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

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes, I have helped organize and collected signatures for the Fair Share Tax Amendment Ballot Initiative, \$15/hr Minimum Wage, and Paid Family and Medical Leave.

3. *Progressive Taxation. Currently, Progressive Massachusetts is working on a constitutional amendment to increase the income tax on income over \$1 million by 4% (Fair Share Amendment, sometimes referred to as the “Millionaire’s Tax”), which will be on the 2018 ballot. Do you support this ballot question?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I have helped organize for the Fair Share Tax Amendment and collected signatures for it.

4. *Sales Tax Holiday. It has been demonstrated over and over that the annual sales tax holiday does not serve its intended purpose of increasing sales, but rather just shifts sales to the weekend of the holiday. Would you oppose efforts to extend the sales tax holiday?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

5. *Corporate Tax Breaks & Disclosure. Do you support the state’s collecting and publicly disclosing the information about the benefits actually provided by corporations receiving tax credits?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

6. *Corporate Tax Breaks & Wages. Do you support requiring any company receiving tax credits from the state to pay a living wage and provide good benefits to all its employees?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

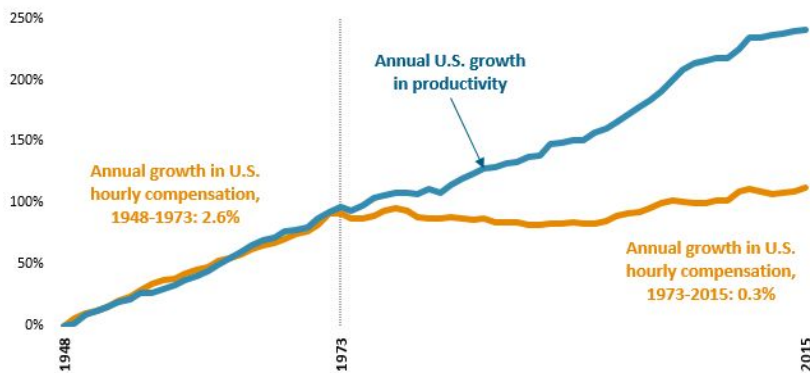
## B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

The Massachusetts economy has continued to grow and recover from the Great Recession, but the gains have not been shared equally. According to various measures of income inequality, Massachusetts now ranks as one of the top ten most [unequal states](#). We are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which strain wages. Most MA workers do not have access to paid medical leave, and only a small fraction have access to paid family leave--gaps that force people to choose between their (or their family's) health and their job.

Productivity has grown significantly since the 1970s, but it is not being reflected in higher wages.

### A Large Gap Has Opened Between Wage and Productivity Growth Since 1973

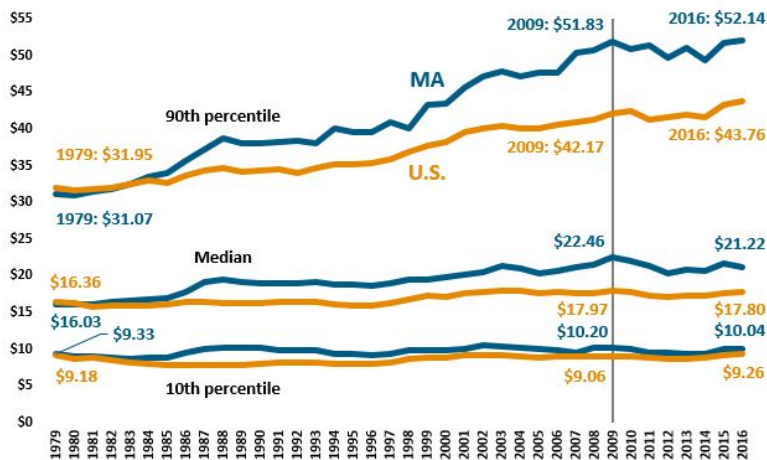
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of unpublished Total Economy Productivity data from Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Productivity and Costs program, wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Trends data, and the Bureau of Economic Analysis' National Income and Product Accounts  
 Note: Wages are the inflation-adjusted average hourly compensation of private-sector production/nonsupervisory workers.

### Wages For Most MA Workers Have Stagnated Since Great Recession

Real Value of Hourly Wage for Selected Wage-Earning Groups in MA and U.S., 1979-2016 (2016\$)



Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey data (deflated using CPI-U-RS).

**1. 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?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** In 2016, Boston was ranked 7th nationally for income inequality as determined by the Brookings Institute. This is due to the stagnated household income, while the cost of living continues to increase. Through a progressive tax package (including the Fair Share Amendment), we can infuse our local public schools with additional revenue and create programs that prepare people for an ever evolving job market, which require certain skill sets.

**2. 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.).*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I have actively participated in Raise Up Massachusetts' mission by collecting signatures for the "Fight For \$15" and "Paid Family and Medical Leave" ballot initiatives. At my current place of employment, I have taken on interns in the past and trained them on the grant writing process. Furthermore, under the previous administration, I also help design and implement a "Ladders of Opportunity" program, working with the Madison Park Vocational Technical High School – to provide opportunities for entry level jobs in transportation.

**3. Increasing Wages.**

**a. Minimum wage.** *Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

**b. Tipped Minimum Wage.** *And making the tipped minimum wage equal to that of the regular minimum wage?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

**c. Indexing the Minimum Wage.** *And indexing the minimum wage to inflation?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

**d. Teen Minimum Wage.** *And reject efforts to create a subminimum wage for teen workers?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

**4. Paid Leave.** *Do you support requiring access to up to 16 weeks of paid family leave and 26 weeks of paid medical leave?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I have helped organize signature gathering with "Raise Up Massachusetts" for the Paid Family and Medical Leave ballot initiative.

**5. Unions -- Part I.** *If workers in Massachusetts make the decision to unionize, would you be willing to publicly support a union-organizing drive and discourage management from fighting their decision?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I have gone on record with the AFL-CIO and other organizations to support union-organizing. I believe in the power of collective bargaining and the positive impacts it has.



6. **Unions -- Part II.** *Since 2010 election, a number of states have rolled back the collective bargaining rights of public workers as part of a well-funded, nationwide assault on unions led by wealthy, conservative donors. Would you oppose any effort to roll back the collective bargaining rights of state or municipal employees?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** I have attended meetings sponsored by the AFL-CIO and have publicly opposed any efforts to roll back collective bargaining rights of state and municipal employees.

7. **Wage Theft.** *Do you support legislation to hold businesses responsible for the wage violations of their subcontractors when the work they do is substantially connected to the company's operations?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

8. **Mandatory Arbitration.** *Would you support legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory arbitration provisions in employment contracts, i.e., requirements that an employee forfeit the right to sue the employer for discrimination, nonpayment of wages or other illegal conduct?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

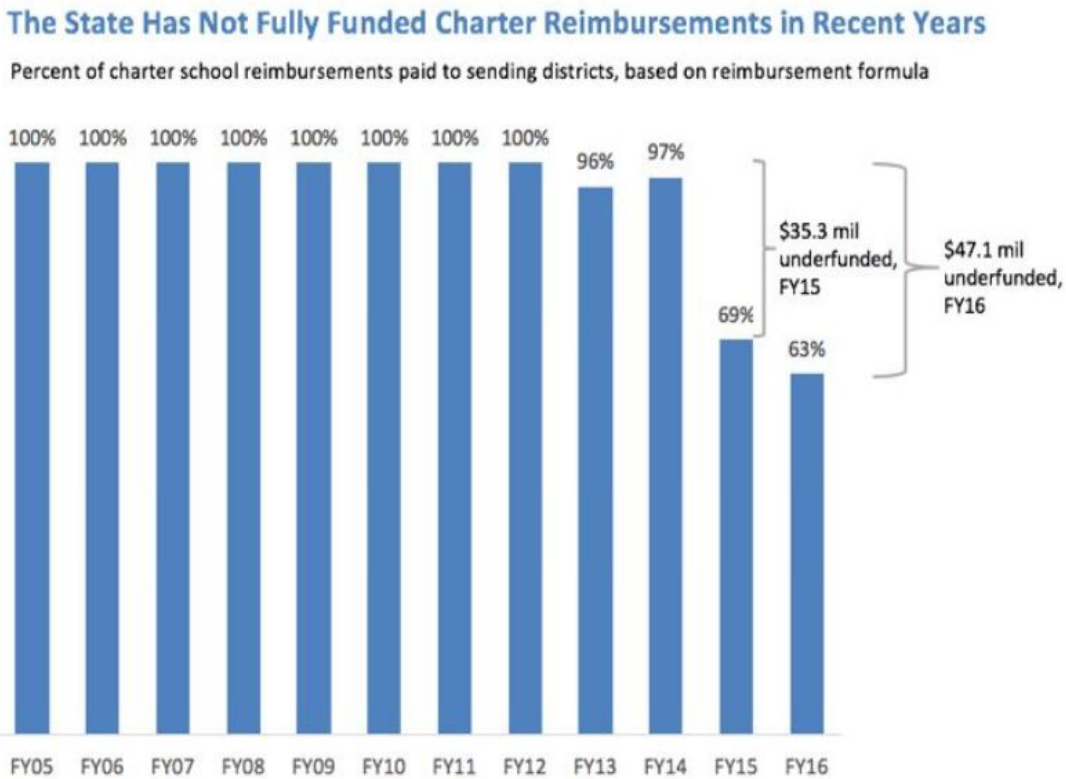
9. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** As according to the Economic Policy Institute, the average CEO Pay is 271 times greater than the typical American worker. Therefore, I would support legislation, which would foster and develop employee ownership of businesses and the establishment of cooperatives here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

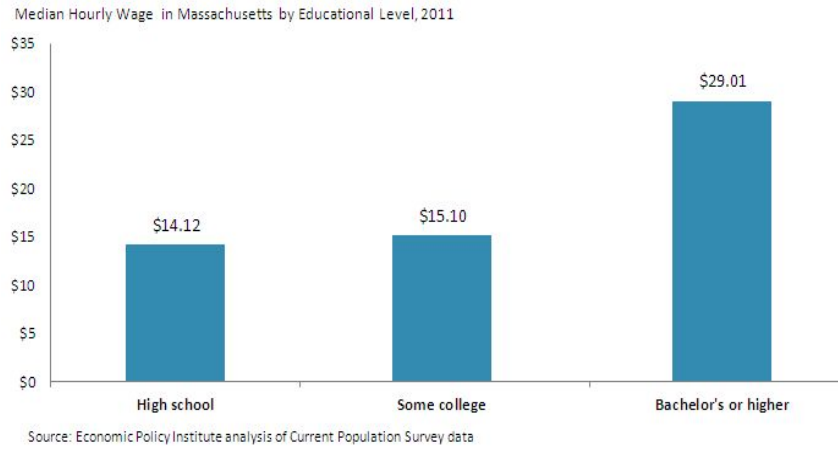
# C. EDUCATION

The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. The mission of public schools is to serve all students, including English Language Learners and those with special needs. However, powerful corporate interests are working to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups are investing millions of dollars to promote the expansion of privately run charter schools, which siphon money from our public K-12 districts while largely excluding students with the greatest needs. Various forms of privatization are being proposed and implemented, including charter schools and “turnaround” schemes that put private management groups in charge of struggling public schools. Costly, mandated standardized test results are used to justify these privatization schemes. Finally, 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.

**The state hasn’t been living up to its responsibility to fully fund our public schools.**

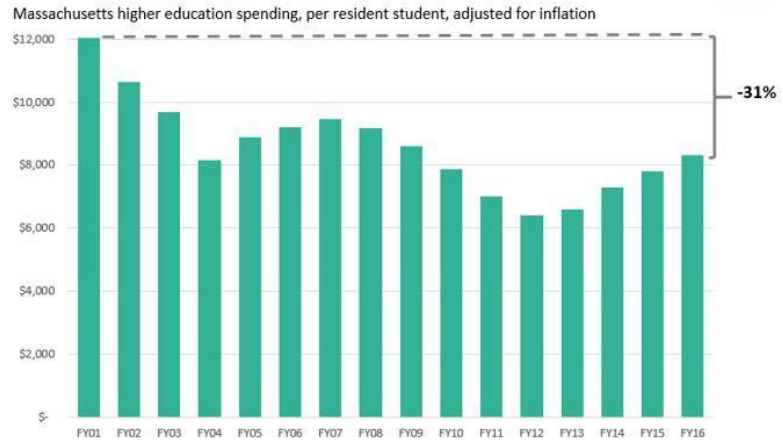


**Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.**



**Massachusetts has been disinvesting from higher education and shifting the cost burden onto students.**

**Per Student, Higher Ed. Cut by 31 Percent Since FY 2001**



1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding public education. What value does public education have in improving our economy as well as in addressing matters of economic justice? How can we close persistent achievement gaps? What measures should the Commonwealth take on these issues?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Massachusetts is the birthplace of Public Education, with the establishment of the Boston Latin School in 1635. Public education is the great equalizer, ensuring all children have a fair shot at success. Having attended and benefiting from public schools as a child, I strongly believe that public schools should be offered to all children here in the Commonwealth.

2. *Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on public education?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I have attended school committee meetings and advocated for keeping the cap on Charter Schools. I have also attended rallies and canvasses in particular for the “No on 2” Campaign back in 2016.

3. *Universal Pre-K. Would you support creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. As a parent of a young child, I know the impact that Pre-K has on the development and preparation of students for school. Pre-K programs here in Massachusetts can cost in excess \$17k. Therefore, creating a level playing field, where all children have access to universal free pre-k, would have a beneficial impact to all families in the long run.

4. *Standardized Testing. Do you oppose the use of high-stakes testing for such things as student promotion, high school graduation, teacher evaluation, and the evaluation of schools and districts?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I oppose standardized testing for high school students for the purpose of graduation, student promotion and teacher evaluations. As a student who attended public schools with an IEP, I can recall vividly the anxiety and pressure that standardized testing put on me. With the implementation of the MCAS system, this has only exacerbated the situation. Furthermore, basing teacher evaluations on MCAS results could inflict punitive measures on teachers who do not teach AP courses or if students are struggling due to a teacher's prior year success.

5. *Equitable Funding. Do you support changing the Chapter 70 Education formula, including the Foundation Budget, to incorporate proper state funding for ELL students, Special Education students, transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I have been a vocal supporter of updating the Chapter 70 Education formula, as recommended by Governor Patrick’s Foundation Budget Committee. This would increase the percentage of funding for ELL and Special Education Students, increase total funding for gateway districts and reduce healthcare costs. Furthermore, I am pleased to see the State Senate take leadership under this issue with Senator Chang-Diaz’s bill being approved. Now it is up to the House to carry this forward.

6. *Charter Schools. Last November, Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools given the millions of dollars it would have siphoned away from public*

*schools.*

*a. Would you support **keeping the cap on charter schools**?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** I was out canvassing in 2016 for the "No on 2" campaign.

*b. Would you support legislation to bring **greater accountability and transparency to charter schools**, such as by requiring them to adhere to the same disclosure and disciplinary standards as public school districts?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** The original mission of the Charter School movement was to act as laboratories of innovation and best practices to be implemented in public schools. Today, Charter Schools lack the serious oversight needed to ensure a uniform learning experience for all students at the cost of taxpayers. During 2016, as indicated above, I canvassed for "No on 2" and presented before the Acton-Boxborough school committee opposing lifting the cap.

*7. **Sex Education.** Do you support requiring public schools that teach sexual health education to provide age-appropriate, medically accurate information that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities that hat includes the effective use of contraception?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

*8. **Higher Education Access.** Would you support legislation to grant in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

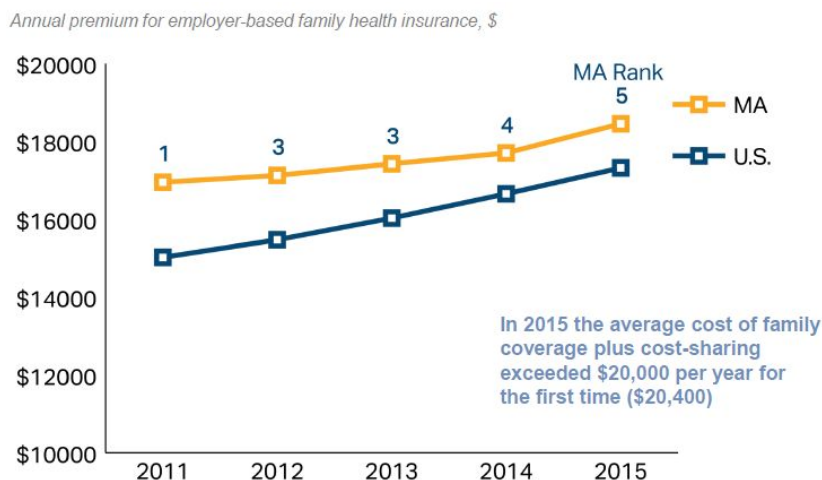
*9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** In most cases, today's job market requires a minimum of a bachelor's degree. We should not be overburdening our students with college debt in order for them to land a job, that will only pay a fraction of the cost of their education.

## D. HEALTH CARE

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with 97% of the state having health insurance. We provided the blueprint for the national Affordable Care Act, with an insurance-based reform passed by the Democratic Legislature and signed by Republican Governor Romney. While the reforms of President Obama's Affordable Care Act are under assault by Republicans (who control the Executive and both legislative chambers), Massachusetts could lead in more progressive health care reforms. Even without the Republican dismantling of national reforms, there is still work to do right here in Massachusetts. MA's Democratic Legislature passed, and the Republican governor signed, the ACCESS bill in 2017--protecting the right to no-fee contraception, which is (federally) under threat: Where our federal advances are being rolled back, Massachusetts could--and should--push progressively forward. Significant disparities in health insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and medical debt remains a persistent problem. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

**MA has among the highest health insurance premiums in the country.**



Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Insurance Component

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

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I believe that healthcare is a human right and therefore, support the implementation of a single payer delivery system here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Having earned my MBA in Health Care Policy and Finance from Brandeis University's Heller School of Social Policy and Management, I would apply that knowledge to helping create a single payer program here in Massachusetts. We currently have the infrastructure in place through MassHealth and the GIC, just need to expand it through a "Medicare for All" type program.

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

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I currently sit on the Three Rivers Affinity Group's (TRAG) Health Care Group. For over a year now, we have lobbied on Beacon Hill for single payer healthcare. We have also sponsored Dr. Don Berwick for a speaking engagement in Acton.

3. *Single Payer. Would you support legislation to enact a single payer health care system in Massachusetts?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I support implanting single payer healthcare here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This would not only help out low-income people, but allow for small businesses to compete for a talented workforce, who otherwise could potentially work for larger companies, which have a more robust healthcare group plans.

4. *Reproductive Rights. Would you support legislation to guarantee women access to abortion care without dangerous delay, isolation, and obstruction?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

5. *Dental Care. Do you support the authorization of dental therapists in Massachusetts, similar to a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, in order to expand access to dental care?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. Having good dental hygiene ensures overall good health. Poor oral health has been linked to endocarditis, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Ensuring all people access to dental care would allow for continued good preventive health care.

6. *Prescription Drug Pricing. Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

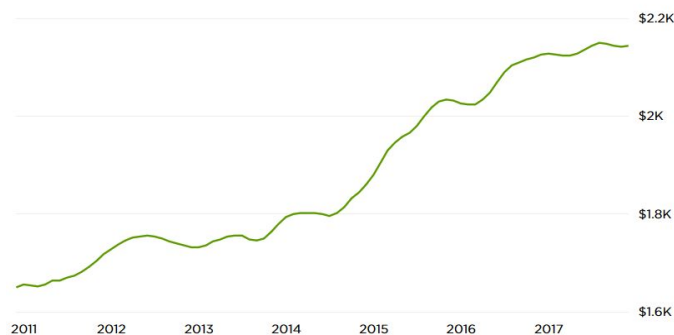
**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

## E. HOUSING

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Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. Although Massachusetts ranked #1 last year in the [US News & World Report's state ranking](#), we were #45 in cost of living and #44 in housing affordability. A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [80 hours a week](#) to afford a modest one bedroom rental home at market rate (and almost 100 hours a week in Metro Boston). Over the last ten years, the need for affordable housing has increased, while funds for affordable housing have decreased at both federal and state levels. The Commonwealth is at risk of losing [14,231 subsidized units](#) by December 31, 2019, as subsidies expire and owners convert properties into market-rate condominiums. Half of families in Greater Boston alone pay over 30% of their income in housing and utilities costs—and over 25% of households pay more than half their income to housing. There is a waiting list of up to ten years for a rental voucher. 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.

### Median rents have gone up by more than 30% since 2011.



(source: [zillow.com](#))

**1. 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?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Working in Boston, I see the homelessness issue first hand. Combatting it requires a holistic approach, which includes mental health experts, housing programs, job training and more. I would work towards funding more job training programs, along with increasing the number of beds in mental health facilities to begin to offset this epidemic.

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

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I have volunteered at the Great Boston Food Bank, Acton Food Pantry and Open Table in Concord in the past.



3. **Funding.** Do you support increasing funding for

a. *The creation of new units of affordable housing, especially low-income units?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

b. *The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

c. *Matching funds for the Community Preservation Act (via fees from the Registry of Deeds)?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

4. **Housing Preservation.** *Currently, certain property owners who guarantee affordable rents have been incentivized by subsidized mortgages via the 13A program. However, many of the contracts under 13A are set to expire in 2019. Do you support giving cities and towns the authority to require such apartments to remain affordable?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

5. **Foreclosure Prevention.** *Do you support a requirement that banks mediate in good faith with homeowners to seek alternatives before beginning foreclosure proceedings?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

6. **Tenant Protections.** *Would you support legislation, such as the Jim Brooks Stabilization Act, that requires landlords to provide a reason when seeking to evict a tenant, like failure to pay rent, damaging property, or breaking a lease; informs tenants of their rights under state law; and increases data collection on eviction?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

7. **Zoning Reform.** *Would you support legislation to upgrade Massachusetts's zoning laws to encourage more affordable housing and transit-oriented, walkable development and to promote inclusionary zoning practices?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

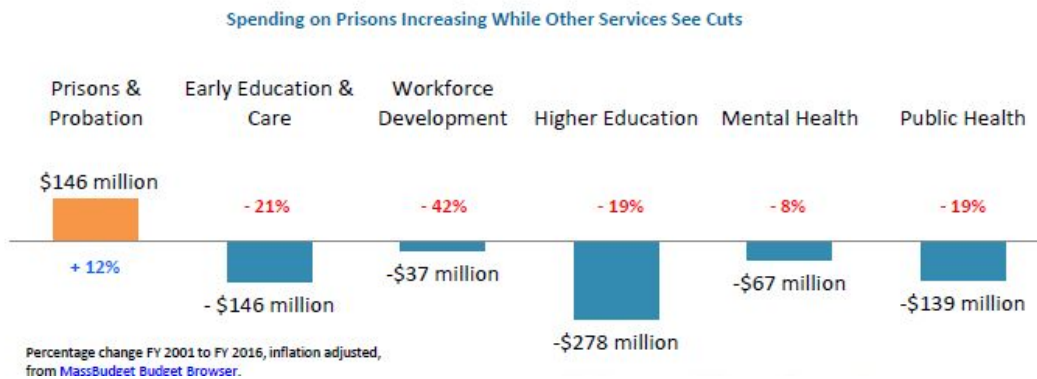
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

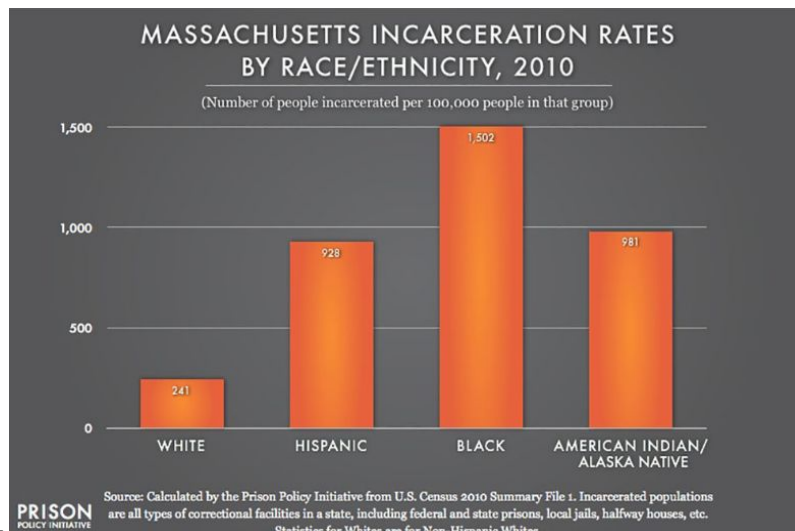
# F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

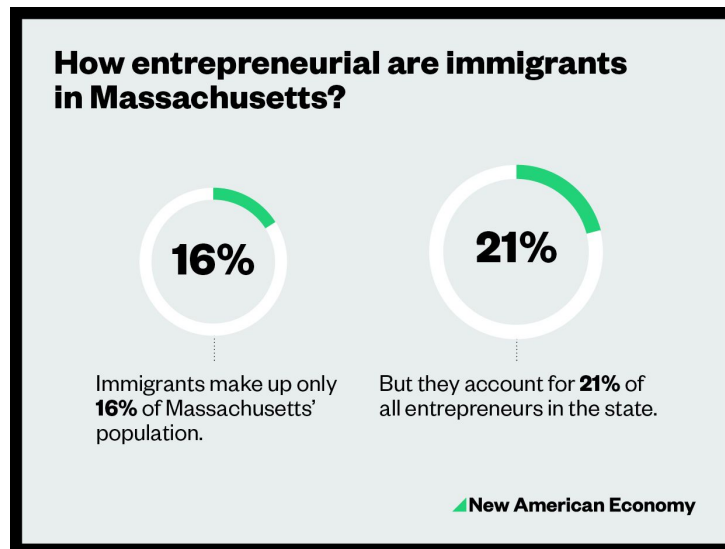
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all” into crisis. We support a judicial system that does not disproportionately target communities of color and the poor, that does not criminalize public health issues such as addiction, that reorients away from ineffective and costly ‘tough on crime’ policies. A comprehensive approach to reform must be taken in all aspects of the criminal justice system.

## Spending on prisons has increased while other services have been cut.



## Significant racial disparities exist in incarceration in Massachusetts





1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding Racial and Social Justice.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** As a Jewish person, I take very seriously issues of racial and social justice. Having been subjected to anti-Semitic attacks myself, my personal values on racial and social justice are summed up by the words of “Tikkun Olam”, which is translated as “repairing the world”. This can be done through the acts of kindness and standing up for what is right. These are words that I live by.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to combat racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and other attempts to marginalize disadvantaged groups.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I have marched to protest the “Rally for free speech” on the Boston Common. I have been a member of the Na’seh group at Congregation Beth Elohim and a member of TRAG, where we have discussed how to combat structural racism. I have also attended two rallies for the Poor People’s Campaign and continue to be involved in the organization.

3. *Trans Accommodations. In 2016, Massachusetts passed legislation to prevent discrimination against transgender individuals in public accommodations. Conservatives are seeking to repeal the bill on the 2018 ballot. Will you advocate for the protection of this legislation?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. I have signed the "Freedom for all Massachusetts" pledge to support our transgender neighbors.

4. *LGBTQ Youth. Our neighboring states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont ban the use of harmful conversion therapy practices for minors. Do you support banning the use of conversion therapy in Massachusetts?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

5. *Mandatory Minimums. The landmark criminal justice reform bill passed earlier this year eliminated or reduced a number of mandatory minimums for drug-related offenses; however, it left in place, or expanded, those related to opioids. The opioid crisis in Massachusetts is severe, but it will not be solved*

*by doubling down on criminalization. Do you support eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid drug offenses?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** Addiction should be addressed as a medical issue and not a criminal justice issue. By addressing addiction with the proper medical support system, this will end the cycle of drug addiction and get people onto the road to recovery.

6. ***Juvenile Justice -- Part I.** Ample research shows that teenage offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to re-offend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood. Teenagers in a juvenile system have access to greater educational and counseling services, and they're much less likely to face sexual assault than at an adult facility. Do you support raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** The Supreme Court has held that brains of children under the age of 18 are still changing. Therefore, the whole Juvenile Justice system need to take this into account and therefore, I support raising the age of criminal majority from the age of 18 to 21.

7. ***Juvenile Justice -- Part II.** Under Massachusetts law, if a high school senior and a high school sophomore have sex – with mutual consent — the senior could be punished by incarceration and then forced to register as a sex offender. In recent years, states have been passing so-called "Romeo and Juliet" laws out of a recognition that such cases only get prosecuted when a parent disapproves of their child's relationship. Do you support the elimination of the charge of statutory rape for consensual sex between youths who are close in age (See H.3065 for reference)?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

8. ***Solitary Confinement.** Do you support limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, and eliminating the use of solitary confinement for at-risk populations, including pregnant women, LGBTQ people, those with mental illness, and those under age 21 or over age 65?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** This is a human rights violation. According the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Federal and state prisons in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts had an annual suicide rate of 32 per 100,000 prisoners from 2001 through 2014. Only three states, Rhode Island, Utah and Montana fared worse. At risk prisoners have been documented to have increased risk of suicides. By reducing the use of solitary confinement, we can reduce the rates of suicides in our prisons.

9. ***Police Accountability.** Do you support the establishment of an independent review board for police shootings in the Commonwealth?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

10. **Militarization of Police.** *Under the federal 1033 program, the US Department of Defense can transfer excess military equipment to local police departments. Such equipment makes police forces look like occupying armies and exacerbates the impact of overpolicing in communities of color. Meanwhile, communities are often left in the dark about the equipment that local police departments are acquiring. Would you support, at minimum, a requirement that local elected officials vote on any such transfer before it can take place?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** We need to work with our community and municipal leaders to ensure that our local law enforcement do not become occupying armies in our communities.

11. **Safe Communities Act.** *Do you support the Safe Communities Act, which prohibits the use of state resources for mass deportations or deportation raids, limits local and state police collaboration with federal immigration agents, and prohibits state support for a Muslim registry?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** I fully support the Safe Communities Act and have been very much active in lobbying towards the adoption of it. This issue is at the forefront of my community, where my Rabbi leads protests at the local ICE Detention Center and my State Senator is the sponsor of the bill.

12. **Safe Driving Act.** *Would you support the Safe Driving Act, which would remove immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

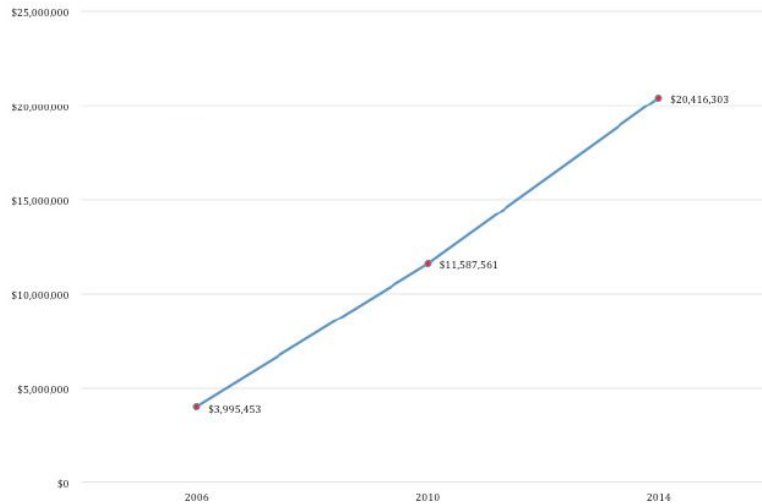
# G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY

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*The influence of big money in politics is detrimental to democracy. Independent expenditures in MA elections have grown by a factor of five over the past decade. A centralized power structure on Beacon Hill, is undemocratic, and makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine the system. A strong democracy requires an engaged electorate, but voter turnout in midterm elections, and especially local elections, remains low. Myths about voter fraud are peddled in order to justify voter suppression. The Election Modernization Act of 2014 helped eliminate Massachusetts’s embarrassing status as one of the ten worst states in terms of voting rights, but there is still much work to be done.*

**Independent expenditures in MA elections have risen rapidly.** (Source: [Common Cause](#))

**Figure 1: MA Independent Expenditure Totals**



1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding Good Government and Strong Democracy.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Protecting voters’ rights, and ensuring that there are no barriers to voting is imperative in keeping a good government and a strong democracy.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to promote transparency, campaign finance reform, legislative rules reform, and access to voting.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** As a state employee, all campaign finances are handled by my treasurer. I have also signed pledges to take no fossil fuel money and the American Promise pledge.

3. *Power and the Legislature. If elected, would you support efforts to dilute the amount of power held by*

leadership in your respective branch of government? For example, would you support a rule change allowing committees to appoint their own chair, instead of leadership?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

4. **Transparency.** Massachusetts is one of only two states where the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Judiciary claim full exemption from the public records laws. Do you support ending that exemption?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

5. **Public campaign financing.** Would you support legislation to create a robust public financing system for state elections?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

6. **Candidate Diversity.** The cost of child care can prove prohibitive to working mothers or fathers seeking to run for office. Would you support legislation to explicitly allow working parents running for office to use campaign funds to pay for childcare while the candidate is "performing work or attending events directly related to the candidate's campaign"?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** As a parent of a 7 year old, I would support legislation allowing for working parents like myself to use campaign funds for childcare, while performing work or attending events directly related to the campaign.

7. **Voting.** Which of the following policies to increase voter participation do you support?

- a. Election day voter registration

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

- b. Automatic voter registration

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

- c. Expansion of early voting to "off-year" elections

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

- d. No-fault absentee voting

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

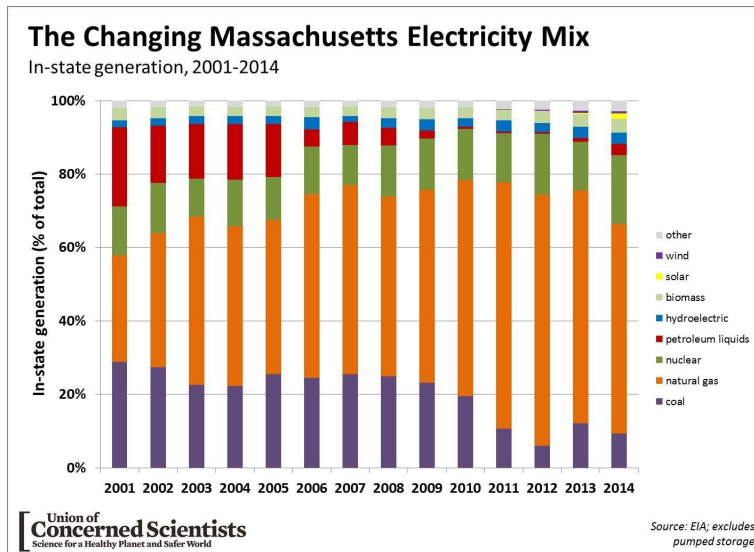
# H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Massachusetts will be hit particularly hard by climate change. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions need to be reduced by 70% by 2050 and brought to 0 by 2080. In 2016, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state has failed to meet its legal obligation to set and enforce annual limits on greenhouse gas emissions as outlined in the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act. Setting and reaching these goals will require the decarbonization of our state economy and a transition away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable sources of energy. In light of congressional gridlock at the federal level, state government must take a role in incentivizing reduced carbon usage and assisting in coordination between agencies and moving forward local government understanding of looming climate threats.

Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and environment for the most vulnerable residents. However, this nominal commitment to “Environmental Justice” has been more rhetorical than real.

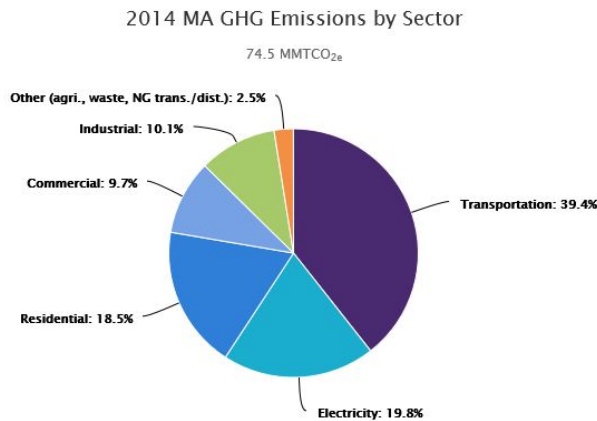
Public transit must play a role in decarbonizing our transportation system, as well as advancing complementary goals of equity and inclusion. However, Massachusetts politicians have lost their understanding of public transit as a public good that benefits all residents and businesses in Massachusetts, not just those who use it in their daily lives. The greatest evidence of this is their neglect of the MBTA: its debt has grown to nearly \$5.5 billion, with over \$7 billion in deferred maintenance costs. Regional Transit Authorities that serve communities, including Gateway Cities across the state, face enormous capital needs as well.

**Despite recent progress, Massachusetts is still overwhelmingly dependent on fossil fuels.**





**Transportation is currently the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in MA.**



(Source: <http://www.mass.gov>)

1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** As someone who enjoys the outdoors with my family, I take personal responsibility in sustaining our environment. Whether it is making sure we make wholesale efforts to restore habitats or the simple act of planting a tree – I believe we have an obligation to leave our environment in better shape than how we received it.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to protect the environment and expand access to public transportation.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** I have worked on many transportation projects throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This includes utilizing Federal funding to expand access for riders and also repair infrastructure; thereby reducing the backlog of state of good repair projects in transportation. Specific projects I have worked on include, but are not limited to

1. Rebuilding Government Center Station
2. The Fitchburg "New Starts" Program
3. Green Line Extension
4. Merrimack River Bridge Reconstruction
5. Hubway - Boston Bike Share Program

3. **Waste Reduction.** *Would you support a statewide ban on single-use shopping bags and a requirement that alternatives be more sustainable?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

4. **Solar energy.** *Do you support increasing equitable access to solar power by removing caps on solar generation and restoring compensation for low-income and community solar?*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes. The Baker Administration's attempt to undermine solar energy needs to be combated. I would support the removal of caps on solar generation and restoring the compensation for low-income and community solar.

5. **Renewable Energy.** Do you support a target of at least 50% clean energy by 2030 for Massachusetts, as adopted in California and New York? (Hawaii is committed to 100% renewables by 2045). To accomplish this, would you support an increase in the Renewable Energy Production Standard (the green energy mandate on utilities) by at least 3% each year?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

6. **Environmental Justice.** Successive and bipartisan gubernatorial administrations have made verbal commitments to environmental justice (EJ) and Governor Deval Patrick issued an Executive Order on Environmental Justice in 2014 which has not been implemented.

a. Would you support implementation of the 2014 EO?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

b. and support efforts to codify environmental justice into law?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

7. **Gas pipelines.** Do you oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

8. **Carbon pricing.**

a. Do you support putting a fee on carbon emissions?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

b. Do you support using some of the revenue from such a fee to invest in **green infrastructure**?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** I support implementing carbon pricing as a way to raise new funding, which would be available for resiliency and clean energy projects.

9. **Public Utilities.** Would you support legislation to allow municipalities to purchase their electric distribution utility (the poles and wires that transmit power) and operate a municipal or cooperative electric utility?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.**

10. **Public Transit.** Do you support finding progressive revenue sources to fund the maintenance, expansion, and improvement of the MBTA and the RTAs?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal: Yes.** I am in support of the Fair Share Tax Amendment, which will bring additional revenue to public transportation and help effectively reduce the "State of Good Repair" backlog at the MBTA and our smaller RTA's.

11. **Regional Transportation Funding.** Would you support legislation to allow municipalities to place a question on the ballot to raise revenue for local and regional transportation projects?

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** Yes.

## III. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

**Limit answer to 150 words or fewer.**

*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.*

**Benjamin Bloomenthal:** One issue of importance, which has not been covered, is continuing to increase gun control here in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I believe we need to remain actively engaged advocating for the "Extreme Risk Protection Order" bill, especially in light of the recent school shootings. This is an additional matter I will strongly fight for on Beacon Hill.