

Byron Rushing

9th Suffolk

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 9th Suffolk

Party: Democratic

Website: <http://www.repbyronrushing.com/>

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

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Primary: September 4

Election: November 6

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Introduction: Progressive Mass

About

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

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

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).

I. About the Candidate

Byron Rushing

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

Byron Rushing: I am running to continue my work in the legislature for my constituents and to support public policy solutions to today's challenges. My priorities will be human and civil rights, the development of democracy; local human, economic and housing development; and housing and health care for all.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

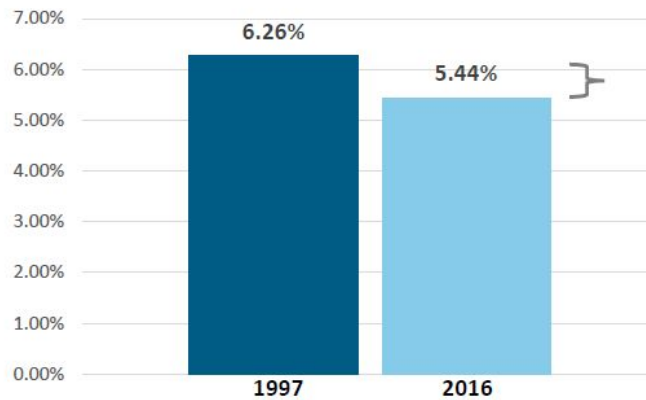
Byron Rushing: A background of community organizing for nine years; of public African American history for ten years. Serving as a state representative since 1983. Current service as Majority Whip. Currently representing most of the South End and the Fenway and those parts of Roxbury which border on those neighborhoods.

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.

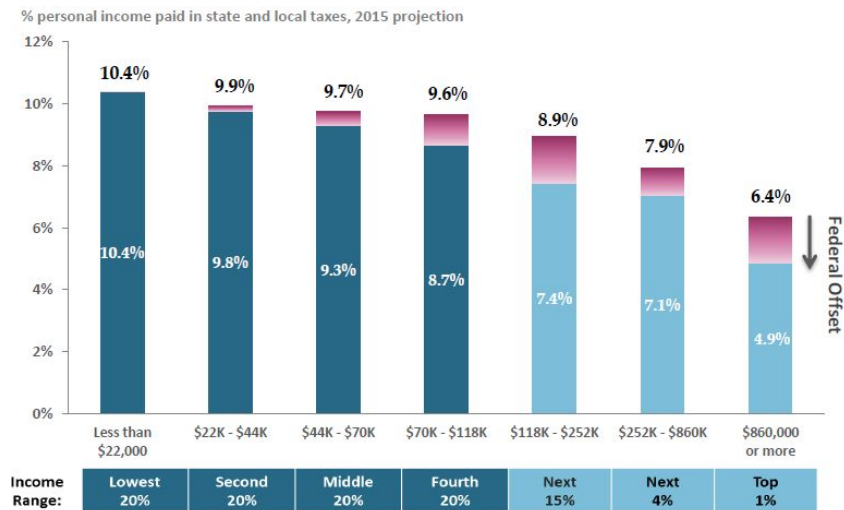
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Byron Rushing: Taxation is a civic duty. It is the most efficient way to raise funds to support public institutions and programs and to support capital investments which aid everyone and those programs which aid the neediest among us. Elected officials should not denigrate the concept of progressive taxation.

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.).*

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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes. And voted to place it on the ballot.

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?*

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes. And I support "clawback" promises if they do not.

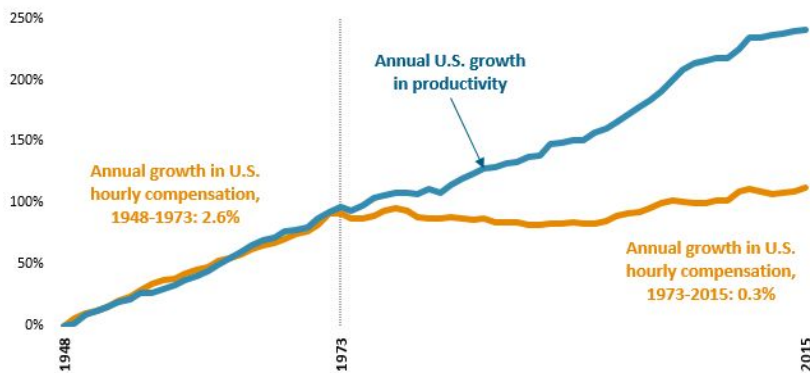
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

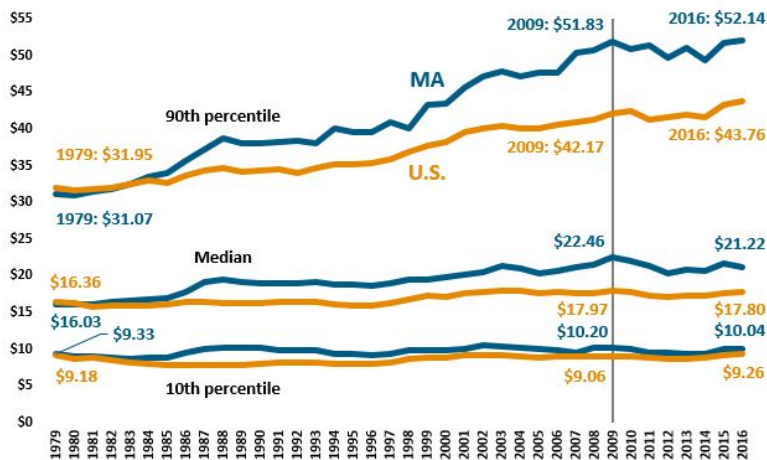
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Byron Rushing: The economic structures should serve everyone. They should not be organized in any way that creates barriers to anyone's advancement and safety. It is a role of government to set the rules for this to occur.

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.).

3. Increasing Wages.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: 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?

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?

Byron Rushing: Yes. And I have filed legislation to allow public workers under certain conditions to strike.

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?

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

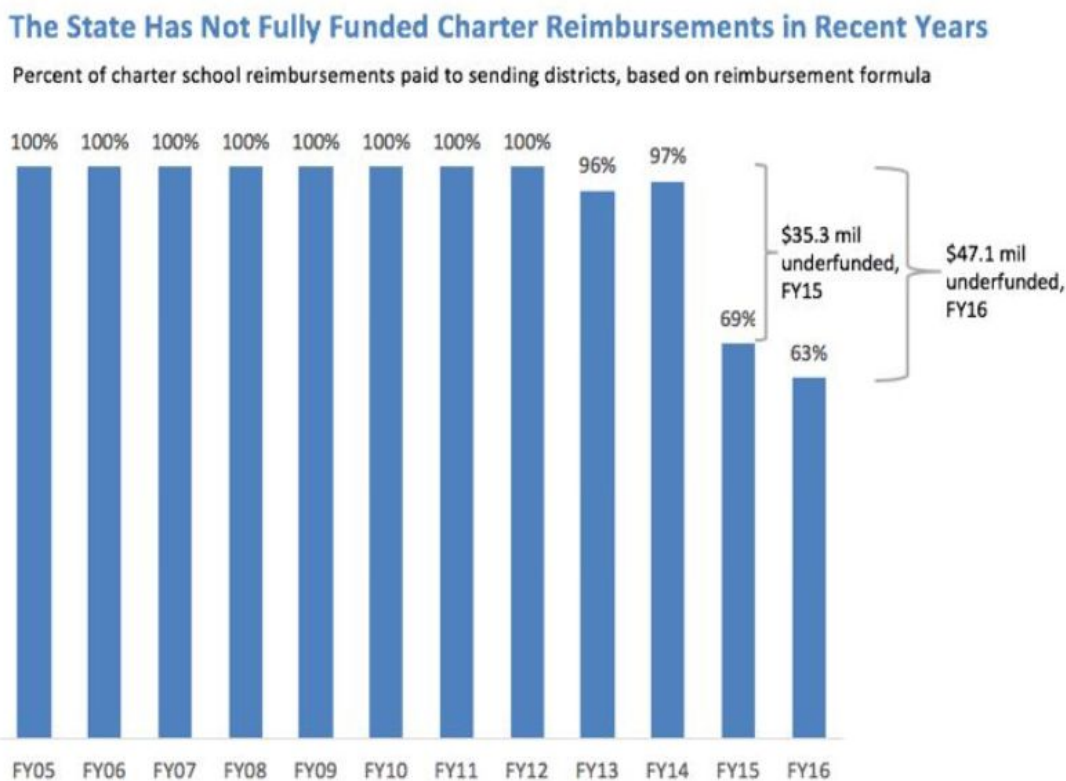
9. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

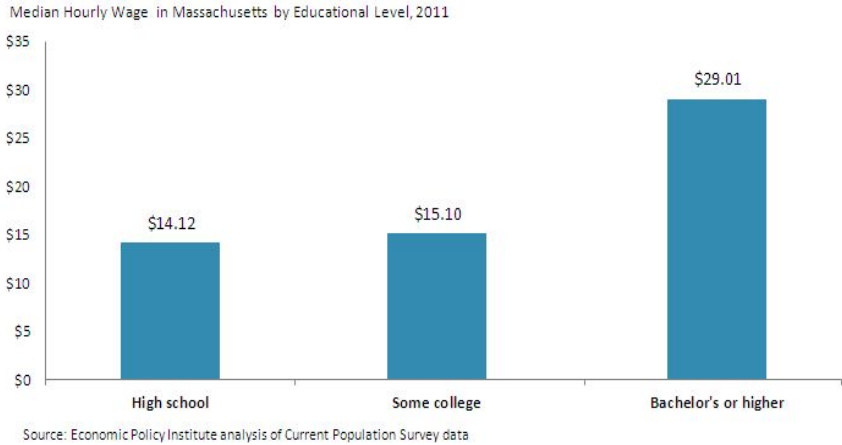
C. EDUCATION

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.

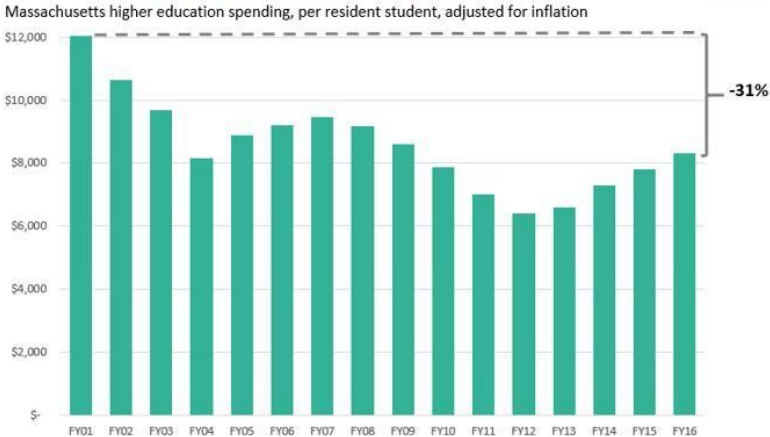


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?***

Byron Rushing: I attended public schools from K to high school. Public education is one of the most important reforms in a democracy. The education systems must all provide excellent education as a norm. No one should have to opt out of our schools for the reason of lack of quality. Massachusetts must provide the resources necessary to accomplish that.

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

Byron Rushing: I have consistently voted for education reform. On a local level, I regularly visit and support the students and teachers at the schools in my District.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?***

Byron Rushing: Yes. Standardized testing should be the gold standard evaluation tool.

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?***

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?***

Byron Rushing: Yes.

- 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?***

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

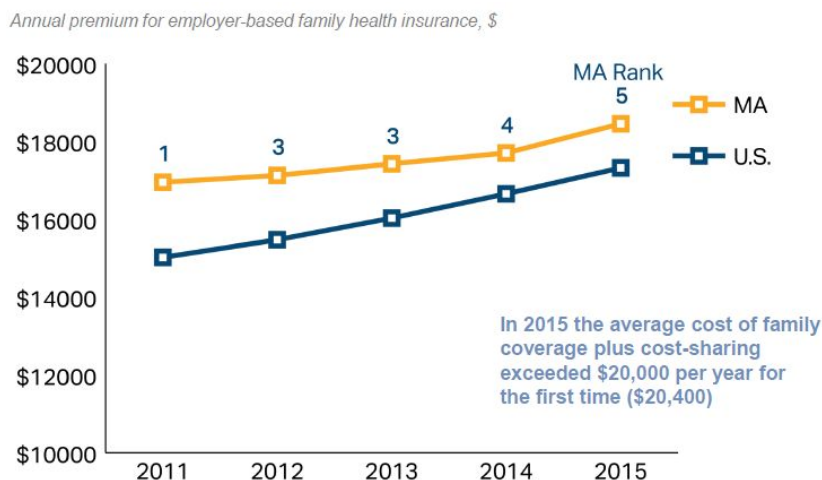
9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** *Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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.*

Byron Rushing: Healthcare is a right. Healthcare for all is one of my priorities. We have made important advances in this regard. Our next tasks are to make this support sustainable and to make the care available to all, especially expanding the definition of health and public health to include addiction leading to drug abuse. And we must use our research on health disparities to inform changes in practice in treatment for all regardless of race and ethnicity.

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

health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes. And I support removing the archival criminalization of abortion codified in legislation and which remain “on the books.”

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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

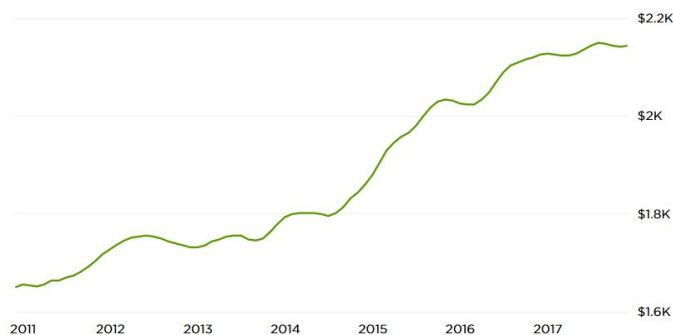
6. **Prescription Drug Pricing.** *Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

E. HOUSING

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?

Byron Rushing: Housing is a right. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it is recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. In this state, that means affordable housing should be a sine qua non of all housing development.

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

3. Funding. Do you support increasing funding for

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

b. *The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes. However, this will remain an ongoing problem until we insist on some government equity involvement for most below-median affordable housing.

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?*

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

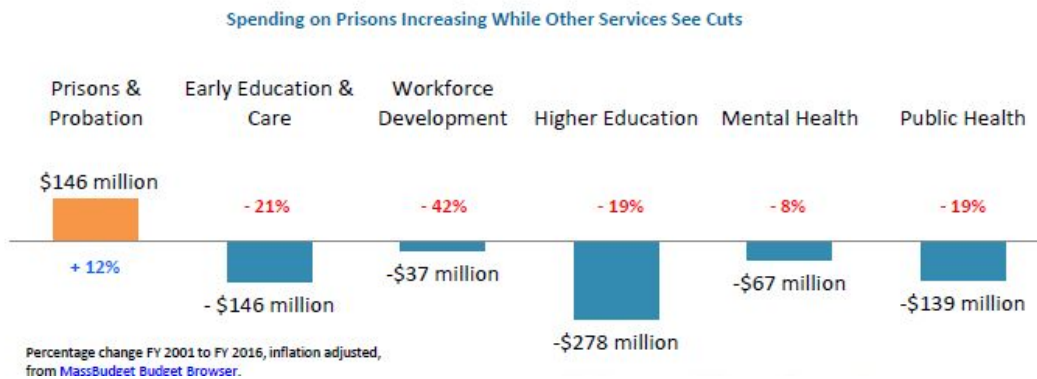
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Byron Rushing: Yes. See answer to question number 5..

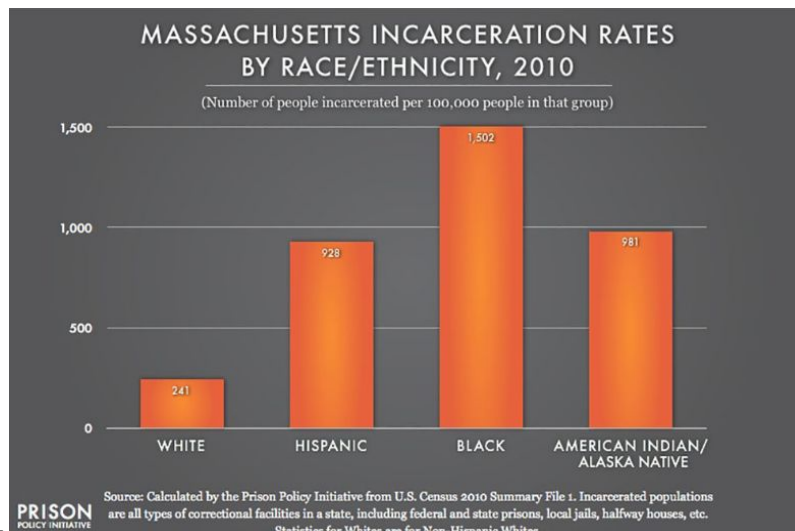
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

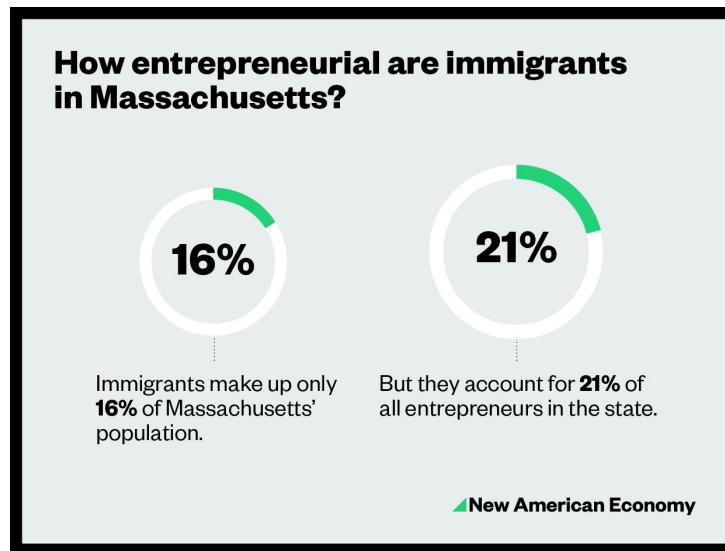
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all” 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.*

Byron Rushing: I believe we all have rights because we are human; all of those rights should be reflected and protected in our civil society. I believe race is an arbitrary construct and that racism is cultural.

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

Byron Rushing: In addition to my lifelong personal experiences, I have organized since my high school days to ensure that the civil rights for people of color are guaranteed and protected. Over the years since then, I have expanded my understanding and work to lead the struggle to include LGBTQ people and other minorities in our legal and ideological definition of "We, the people..."

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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes. Along with Carl Sciortino, I was the lead co-sponsor of both transgender civil rights laws in MA.

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?*

Byron Rushing: 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?

Byron Rushing: Yes. I supported the ending of mandatory minimums.

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?

Byron Rushing: Yes. Until this is adopted, I support the separation of these age groups in the house of corrections, the Department of Corrections and in prisons.

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)?

Byron Rushing: 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?

Byron Rushing: Yes. And I supported reforms included in the criminal justice bill.

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

Byron Rushing: 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?

Byron Rushing: Yes. Although I have not seen a successful, so-called review board, and believe we have to search for more fundamental changes and training of police.

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?

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?

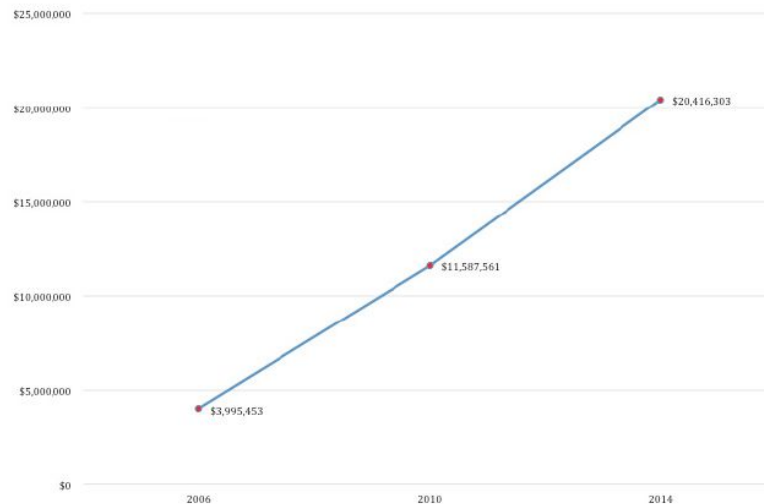
Byron Rushing: Yes.

G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY

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.*

Byron Rushing: The development of democracy is one of my priorities. Good government involves the participation of everyone and providing the educational and tangible resources for that to occur.

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

Byron Rushing: I have supported legislation on campaign finance reform and access to voting, including several versions of automatic voter registration and support unrestricted absentee ballots. We should stop doing Tuesday elections. Weekend elections should be the norm.

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?*

Byron Rushing: Not if I'm elected Speaker. Seriously, I am ready to review and organize for progressive legislative rules reform.

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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: 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"?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

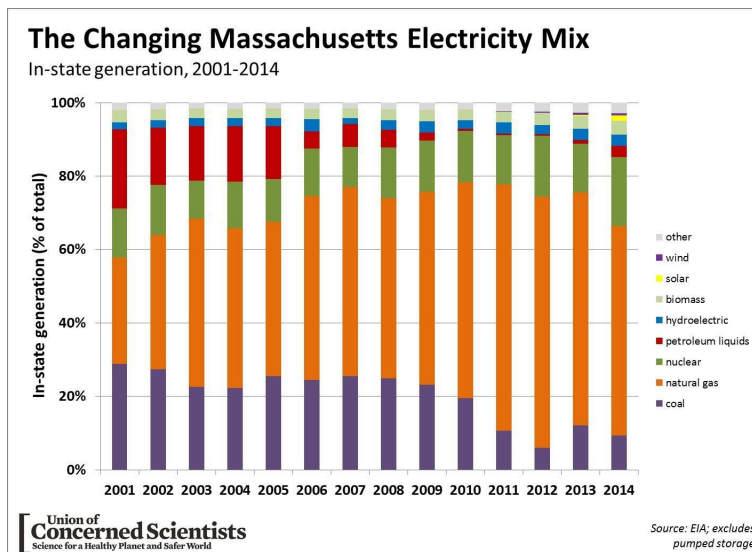
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

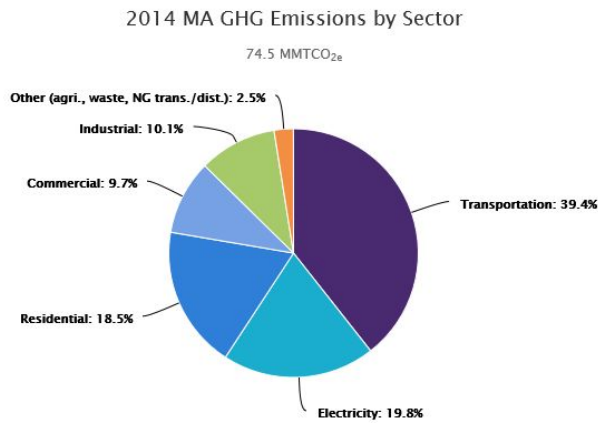
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and 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.*

Byron Rushing: Ultimately the natural environment must be protected for all living creatures. The environment must be viewed as a resource for everyone and not privatized.

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

Byron Rushing: I support the state remaining a signatory of the Paris accords; I opposed further natural gas pipelines; I am a member of the clean energy caucus.

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

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?*

Byron Rushing: 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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes. I've written an upcoming opinion editorial for the Boston Globe.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes. Although with most to be returned to individual taxpayers.

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?*

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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

Byron Rushing: Yes.

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?*

Byron Rushing: 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.

Byron Rushing: During all my time in Boston, I have worked for and with community-based organizations for greater political participation and against neighborhood debilitation. I serve in office with an understanding of the history of poor and working class people and with a belief in democratic citizen control.

As an elected legislator, my tasks are to sponsor, support and revise legislation, to respond to the immediate concerns of my constituents, and to speak out on public policy issues and questions in ways that support, educate and challenge my constituents. I am convinced that effective representation is mutual, a partnership between me and my constituents. I listen and debate, learn and respond, suggest and lead, not in isolation, but with the authority which derives from my election, and ongoing discussions and consultations with my constituency.