

Darrin D'Wayne Howell

5th Suffolk

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 5th Suffolk

Party: Democratic

Website: <http://darrinhowell.com/>

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

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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

Darrin Howell

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

Darrin Howell : I'm running for elected office to bring my lived experiences and record of advocacy and public service to the next level. I want to do more for my neighbors, for Roxbury and Dorchester, and for working families across Massachusetts. I've been an aggressive advocate for change and progress as a private citizen, but I know I can be even more effective as State Representative.

Many candidates talk about their support for progressive values, but my advocacy for the priorities we share goes beyond just words. I believe in bringing change through action -- and for more than a decade, I have worked on behalf of disenfranchised communities and low-wage workers to advance social and economic justice issues at the local, state and national levels.

The top priorities for my district are housing access, public safety, and creating the education and job opportunities needed to keep people away from the lure of the street life and all that comes with it. The streets are always hiring, and until we address these issues and other upstream drivers of poverty and inequality, that lure will always be stronger than most can afford to resist.

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

Darrin Howell : Both my lived experiences and record of advocacy and public service has prepared me to go to the next level. I got my first break working to support constituents in much of the district I am running to represent, and have spent the eight years since in a number of community and labor organizing roles, working to advance a host of progressive issues. I've been a strong advocate in the halls of power -- from City Hall, to Beacon Hill, to Washington -- pushing leaders on key budget and legislative priorities that support working families. And when those leaders fail to listen, I've been an even more outspoken voice in the streets, leading marches and rallies to demand action.

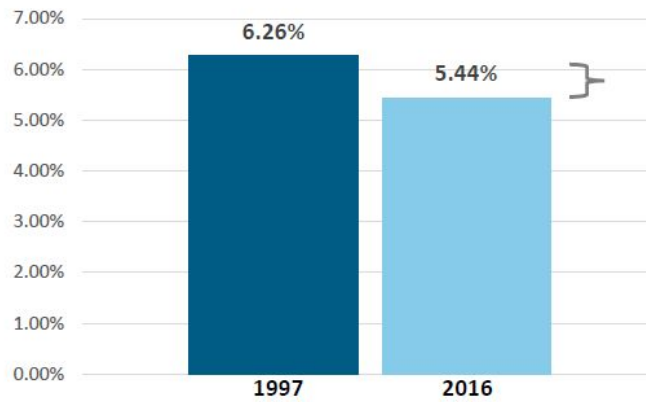
But more than anything, it is my personal experience coming up under challenging circumstances in Dorchester and Roxbury that informs my approach to government and advocacy. I know first-hand that during difficult times we need leaders who truly understand the struggles our communities face -- and recognize that bringing like-minded people together in action is the best way to address critical issues. I am prepared to lead on these issues because I've lived through and overcome many of them myself.

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.

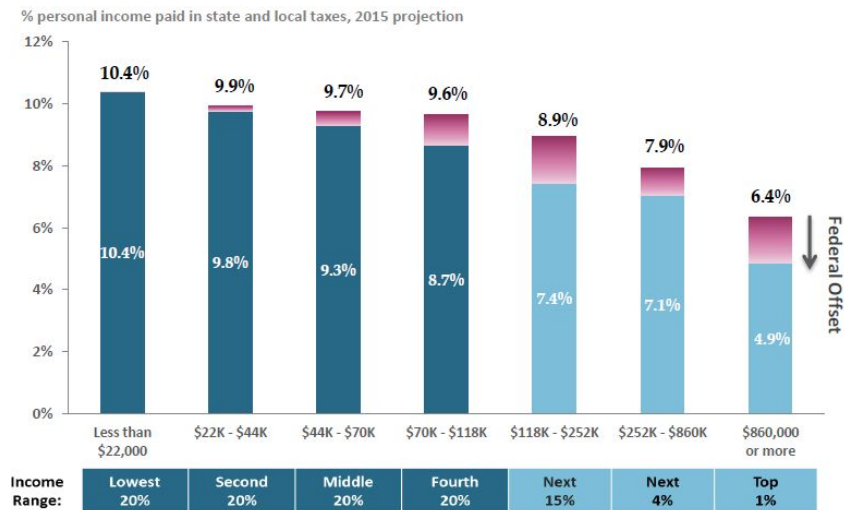
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Darrin Howell : As State Representative, you can count on me to be a strong partner in repealing regressive tax policies, improving accountability and transparency around tax subsidies, and seeking progressive revenue sources. We must absolutely do everything we can to level the playing field for working families in Massachusetts -- on wages, taxes, paid leave and more. As State Representative, I will seek the guidance and recommendations of the members of Raise Up, Mass Alliance, Progressive Massachusetts and like-minded coalitions on progressive 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.).*

Darrin Howell : I have actively worked with the Raise Up MA coalition on the Fair Share ballot initiative since the very beginning, well before these efforts became formal entities with websites and staff. I've participated in core community and coalition discussions, led signature collection teams, and lobbied successive legislatures on this issue -- as well as other progressive revenue legislation.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. I am a strong supporter of the effort to ensure Millionaires and Billionaires pay their fair share in taxes.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. To me, this has always felt like a bit of a gimmick. And if I'm being honest, most of my friends and neighbors in Roxbury and Dorchester aren't deciding whether or not to buy new, expensive appliances or luxury goods based on sales tax savings. They're worried how they'll afford next month's rent and keep food on the table for their kids. Despite the hype, this measure seems pretty out of touch to most families.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. Broadly speaking, there are better uses for our tax dollars than corporate welfare. And when we do provide tax incentives, award contracts or otherwise invest in businesses, it would be well within reason to expect some accountability and transparency in return.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. I'd even take this premise a step further to say the Commonwealth should scrutinize Executive Compensation and the CEO-to-worker pay gap at any institution receiving

taxpayer funds. Taxpayers subsidize businesses and non-profits to ensure important services are delivered and critical infrastructure is maintained, and our money should be dedicated to that mission.

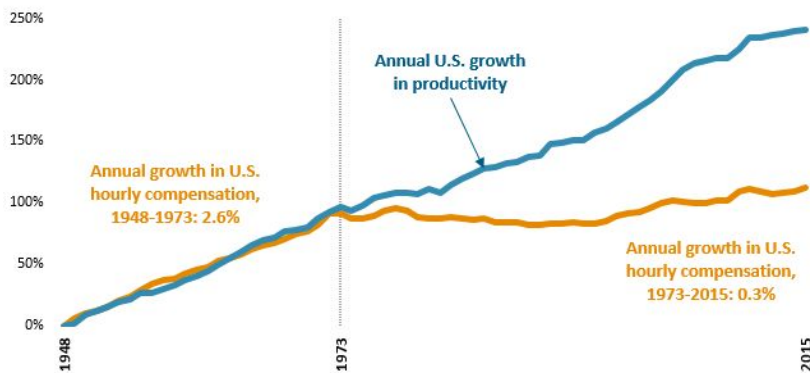
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

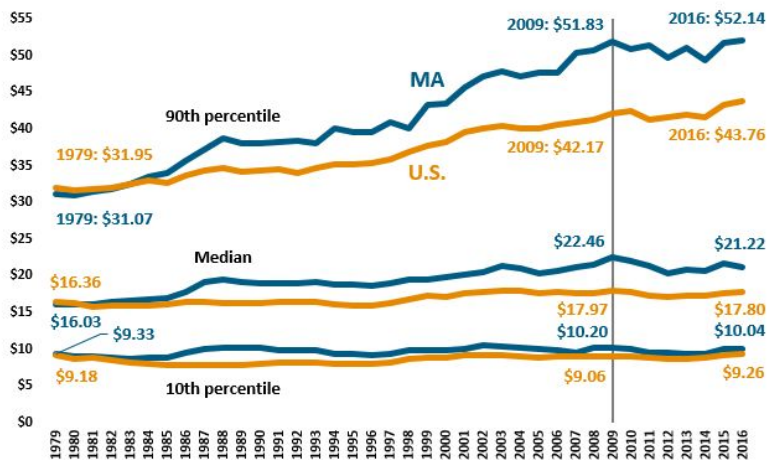
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Darrin Howell : Simply put, we need to raise wages, invest in quality education and double down on transportation infrastructure. On wages, the legislature has the chance right now to institute a universal minimum wage of \$15 statewide -- and if they don't take action, the Raise Up Massachusetts ballot initiative will come close to accomplishing the same. A similar situation has emerged on investment in education and transit: the Fair Share Amendment (Millionaire's Tax) will generate as much as \$2 billion in revenue to devote specifically to our schools and transportation options. We must pass this Amendment to ensure everyone pays their fair share toward the services that sustain our communities -- and we must fight back against attempts to drain our Commonwealth of vital resources (see recent developments on the sales tax, for example).

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.).

Darrin Howell : The "Fight for \$15" movement is just one of many examples of my role as a leader on issues that benefit working families. I've been involved since the very beginning -- recruiting everyone from fast food workers to faith leaders into our shared movement for respect on the job, dignity in our work, and fair wages and union rights for all. I plan to maintain an action-oriented approach on these issues as State Representative, working hand-in-hand with individuals and organizations who are at the vanguard of the fight for progressive change.

3. Increasing Wages.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. See prior responses.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. This isn't just a wage inequality issue -- it is also a consistent driver of workplace sexual harassment and assault of workers who depend on tips to support themselves and their families. Regardless of the outcome of the current legislative negotiations, our goal should be One Fair Wage, along the lines of recommendations in S.1004 and H.2365.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. When this matter was first brought before the legislature, I was asked by Raise Up MA to secure the support of several holdouts, including Rep. Holmes. We were able to get him and others on record, for the first time in the history of this fight, as supporting a minimum wage indexed to inflation.

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

Darrin Howell : 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?

Darrin Howell : Yes. No person should have to choose between the job that they have and the family that they love.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes. I have stood in solidarity with many union locals in their efforts to bring attention to key workplace issues and conflicts. I support the right of all workers to collectively bargain around wages, working conditions and other issues that affect the communities they serve. My record on these issues has been cited as a key reason the Greater Boston Labor Council, Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and a host of individual union locals unanimously endorsed my candidacy.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes. I support the right of all workers to collectively bargain around wages, working conditions and other issues that affect the communities they serve.

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?

Darrin Howell : 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?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

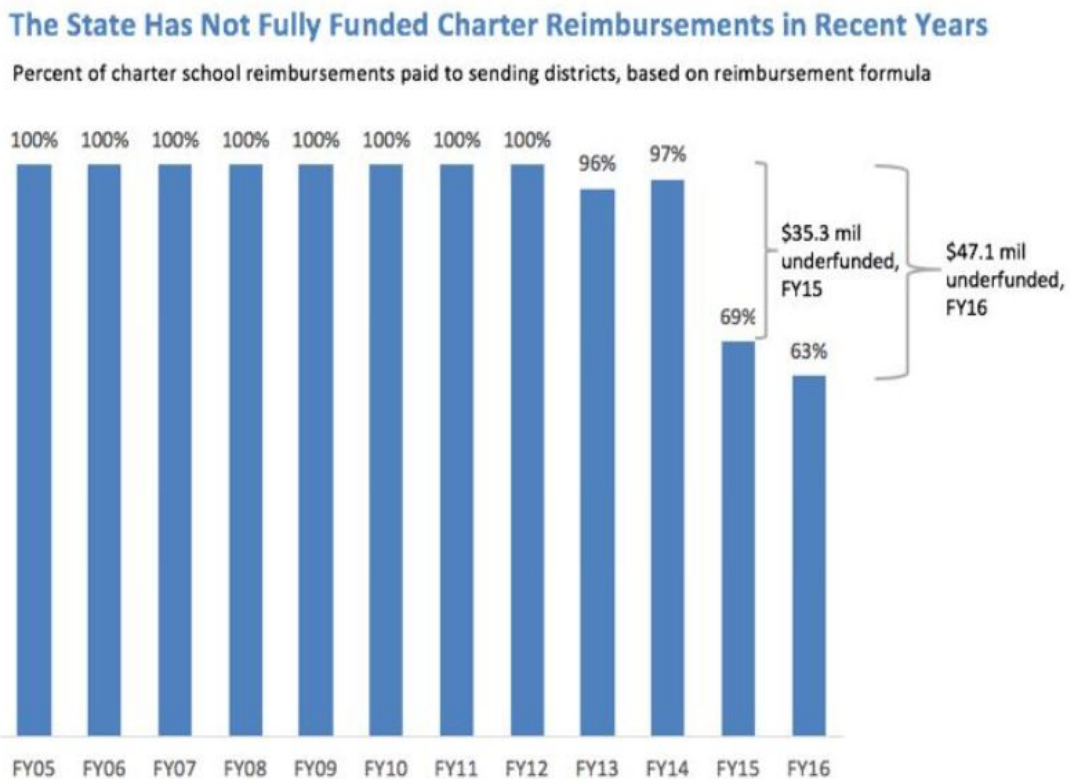
9. ***Economic Democracy.*** Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

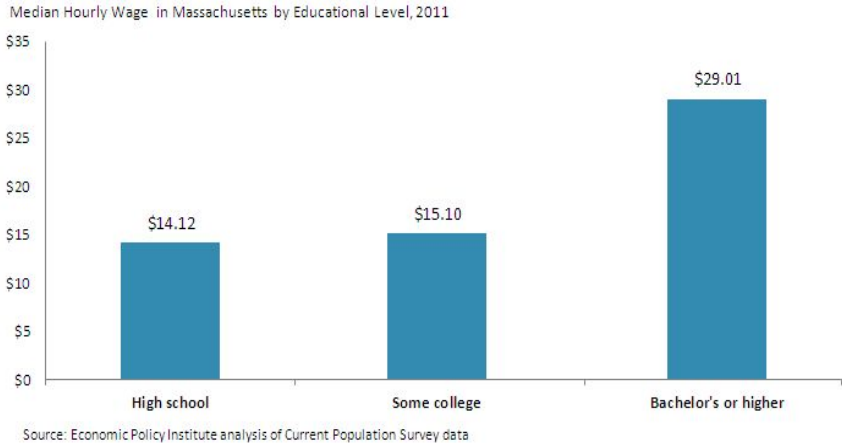
C. EDUCATION

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.

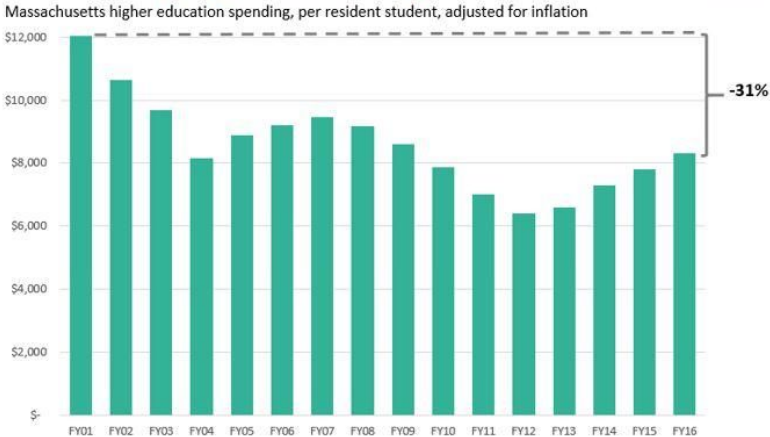


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Darrin Howell : Like many other parents of school-age children, my primary concern is that our public schools should remain public -- and that means maintaining local control within our communities whenever possible. It's impossible to overstate the importance of early childhood education. The experiences our children have at this early stage have a profound effect on their ability to succeed academically and professionally. We need significant investments in early childhood initiatives -- from elimination of the childcare voucher waitlist to universal access to Pre-K programs across the state.

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

Darrin Howell : I was a vocal supporter of the "No on Question 2" campaign -- and strongly opposed the effort to increase the cap in 2016. While I ultimately left the state temporarily to help the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton in Florida, I was thrilled to see the incredible turnout in opposition to the ill-fated charter plan in Massachusetts.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. See earlier response.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. There is inadequate funding for public education across the board -- and larger cities like Boston are often hit hardest when budgets tighten. With such a significant number of low-income students from diverse backgrounds in our Gateway Communities, there is a clear need to adjust the outdated foundation formula and increase Chapter 70 aid statewide to meet the needs of today's classrooms.

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?

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. I also feel it's important to highlight proposed "Partnership Zone" legislation here, which is a key concern for our educators and allies. Know that I can be counted on to stand in strong opposition to any attempt to weaken the voices of workers. With more than a decade of experience as a labor and community organizer, I understand first-hand the value of all workers' ability to work collectively to raise and address issues of concern. These rights are especially important among educators, who are in the unique position to advocate for funding priorities, teaching and learning conditions, classroom sizes and programmatic needs that are critical to preparing our children for success. I would vocally oppose any legislation that seeks to weaken educators' efforts to advocate on behalf of our schools.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes.

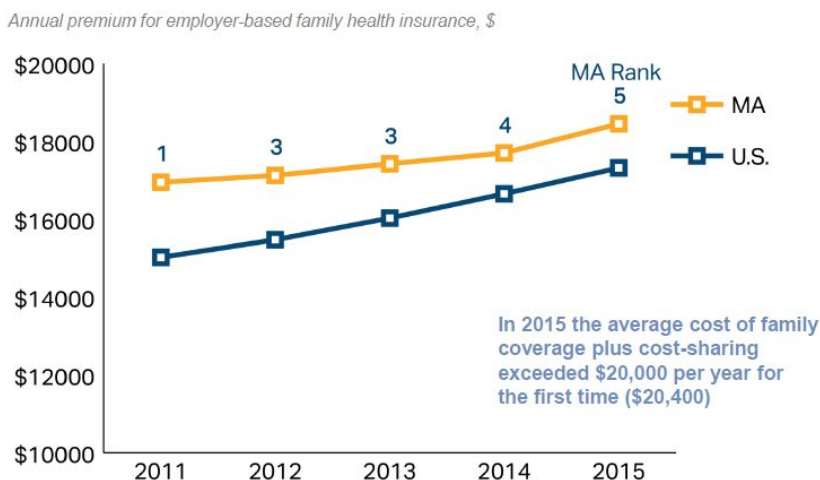
9. ***Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Darrin Howell : 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.*

Darrin Howell : I've worked hand in hand with front-line healthcare providers for several years now through my role with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, so I have a lot more thoughts on this topic than a few sentences can do justice. But in the big picture I will say that as long as our current healthcare system is in place, we must push for more rapid adoption of payment models that focus on positive outcomes, quality and value for patients – not the volume of tests conducted or procedures performed. That said, overall access to care remains a huge concern, especially in low-income neighborhoods like those I represent. Passage of the Affordable Care Act and state-based reforms still

didn't bring us to universal coverage — and that was before the Republican Congress started doing everything it could to undermine our progress. So we can't rest in our efforts to identify new opportunities that get us closer to a single payer health insurance system. This has to be our focus if we want any hope of dealing with the long-term burden of rising healthcare costs. With very few exceptions, public options cost less, deliver higher quality care and are more efficient than profit-motivated insurance plans. I will be a strong and vocal voice on this key issue.

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

Darrin Howell : My role as a Political Organizer for 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East has put me at the crossroads of many political and policy battles on a host of healthcare, home care and independent living issues. I have personally lobbied on behalf of legislative and budget priorities directly related to healthcare access, safety net funding, cost containment, safe staffing ratios and the role healthcare institutions play in our communities — among many other issues. This comes in addition to several years of work within grassroots coalitions, bringing people together to push for progressive action to address upstream challenges that directly affect our health and well-being.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. Absolutely. Identifying ways to get us closer to a single payer health insurance system must be our focus if we are looking to deal with the long-term burden of rising healthcare costs. With very few exceptions, public options cost less, deliver higher-quality care and are more efficient than profit-motivated insurance plans.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. In the face of blatant attacks on women's health from the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans, we should be doing more at the state level to protect and expand access needed critical health services. I look forward to working with Planned Parenthood and other allies to develop strategies to move us forward here in Massachusetts.

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?*

Darrin Howell : 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?*

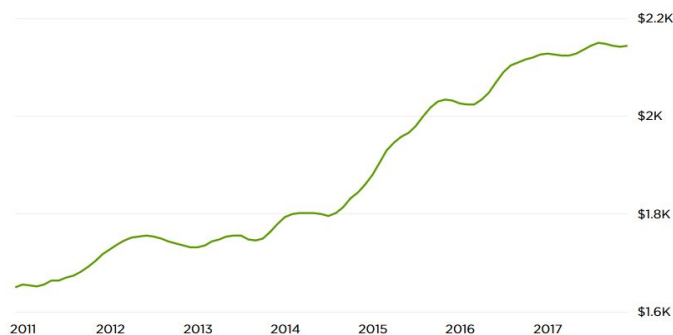
Darrin Howell : Yes. I have serious questions about whether profit is an appropriate motive in healthcare delivery. By definition, increased profits can only be derived in one or two ways: you either cut costs or you raise revenue. In healthcare, that almost always means reducing quality of/access to care or spiking out-of-pocket costs for people who already see double-digit price increases almost every year. The whole system seems antithetical to our founding as a nation driven to guarantee life, liberty

and the pursuit of happiness -- none of it's possible without health.

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?

Darrin Howell : Access to safe, clean housing is the foundation of health and well-being, so this is an issues that is fundamental to the health of our communities. For all the talk on Beacon Hill regarding “reducing health costs” and “improving the quality of healthcare,” we too often overlook the social and environmental factors that account for up to 70% of health outcomes -- and are huge drivers of unnecessary costs when left unaddressed. We must do better.

I will be a champion on these issues as State Representative. I hope to be appointment to the Joint Committee on Housing, as these issues are among the top concerns cited by friends and neighbors in my community. In the face of ever-rising rent and gentrification threats, we must do more to ensure individuals and families are not displaced or left without a place to call home.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

b. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. I have a long history of activism with organizations like CityLife/VidaUrbana to combat illegal foreclosure and protect renters from predatory landlords.

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?*

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

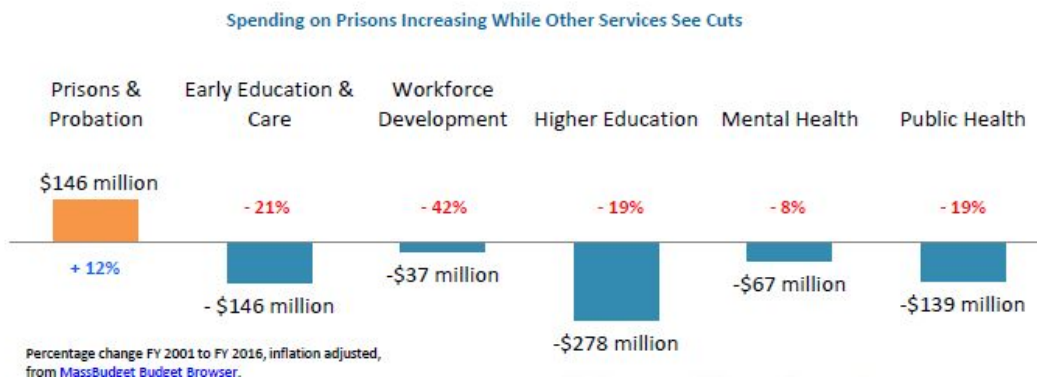
8. Combating Speculation. *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

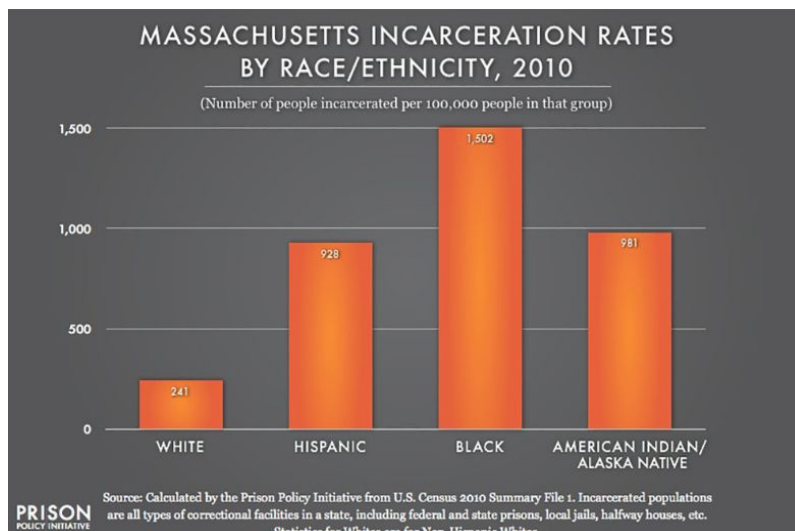
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

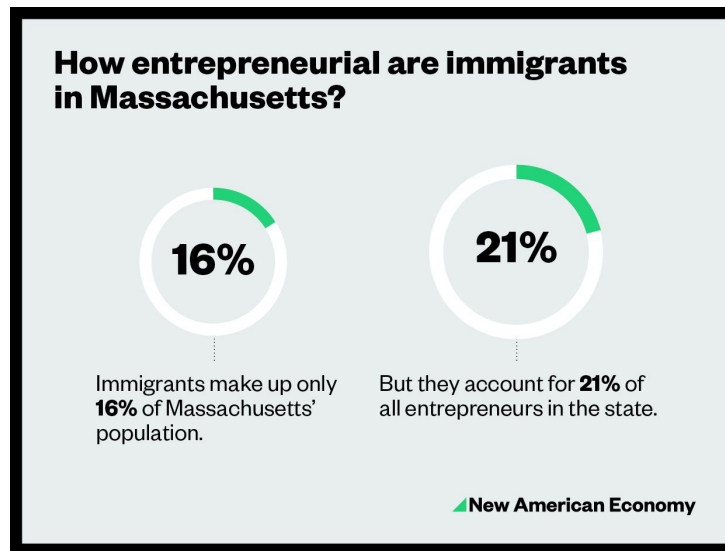
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Darrin Howell : I have far more to say on this topic than ~150 words can communicate, so I hope we'll have the chance to discuss these issues further in person. But I want to share a bit about my own personal struggle -- as it's a huge reason I'm running for office today.

Like many of my neighbors, I've struggled to make ends meet and support a family. I've been on that endless, dead-end search for safe, affordable housing. I've lost loved ones to community violence and dealt first-hand with that trauma. And like many of my friends -- and so many other young, black men out there -- I've struggled with the pull of the street life. When you combine a difficult home environment as a kid with limited education and even fewer resources, job prospects as an adult are pretty bleak. We've seen how this story plays out later in life, over and over again.

Our nation's dark history of racial and social injustice is at the core of many of these issues. That's why, for the past 12 years, I've dedicated my life to public service -- doing everything I can to fight the social ills and inequality that plague our community. And my passion for this work is deeply rooted in personal understanding the struggles that people go through. I want to make sure that no one in my community is forced to make some of the difficult decisions I've had to make in my own life.

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

Darrin Howell : A key place where many of these challenges play out is within our criminal justice system. I have been a longtime advocate and speaker on criminal justice reform -- as well as a mentor to those overcoming prior incarceration. I was an active participant in the Jobs Not Jail Coalition and have been vocal in my opposition to mandatory minimum sentencing.

I'd be happy to speak in greater detail in person about my personal experiences with racism and the criminal justice system -- as well as my efforts to support families who have been affected by incarceration.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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?*

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. A major contributing factor to mass incarceration is the number of individuals who have been sentenced to serve lengthy sentences for non-violent drug offenses. There is no evidence to suggest this approach has led to a reduction in crime or recidivism. The recently-passed reform legislation is just a first step in a much larger, fundamental overhaul that is needed within our criminal justice system.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. I own that, as a youth, I sold drugs and participated in illegal activities in order to generate money. I own that I had no problem carrying firearms in order to protect what was mine. And I admit that I had my share of relationship problems and understand the challenges that substance use can bring. I served real time in jail back then.

So I speak to these issues with first-hand experience, and I can't underscore the importance of second chances. I did my best to make amends for the choices I made in my youth, I really didn't see a light at the end of the tunnel until a City Councilor by the name of Chuck Turner answered my call. From that point forward, I've done everything I've can since then to serve as a living example that you can transcend your circumstances -- that your worst obstacles and trials don't have to be your defining moments.

I say all this because the foolish things kids do when they're young are rarely representative of who they'll be as adults. But that's only true if we give them the chance to become productive adults in the first place.

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)?

Darrin Howell : Yes. Though I would certainly want to learn more about the specifics of how consent and related issues are defined in any proposed statute. We need to be sensitive to the power dynamics that can play out in seemingly-consensual relationships -- even among young people. I'd like more information about Massachusetts-specific proposals, if available.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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?*

Darrin Howell : 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?*

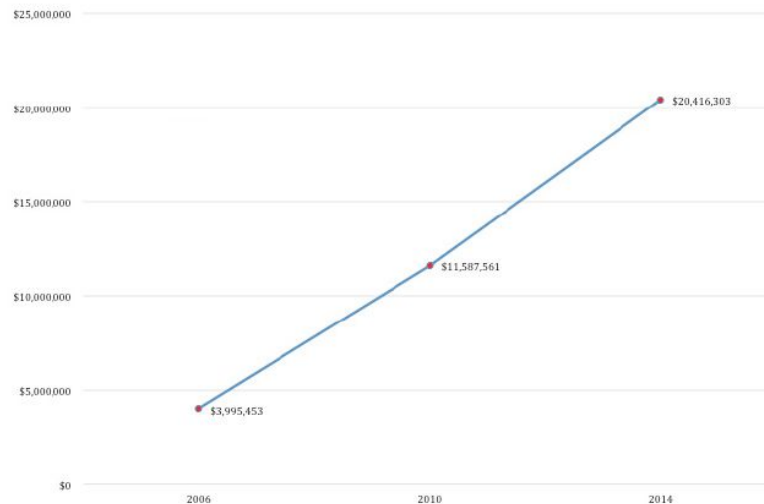
Darrin Howell : Yes.

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.*

Darrin Howell : Again, I believe that true change is only possible through direct action and involvement. I've been part of and led numerous issue campaigns that won against the odds due to a group of dedicated advocates refusing to back down or give up. The successful push to raise the minimum wage to \$11/hr is a solid example: legislative leaders laughed when we first suggested the idea. But 200,000+ volunteer-gathered signatures later, they certainly took the matter much more seriously. Not every important issue comes down to a statewide ballot initiative, but the core principle still stands: by working together, we can accomplish anything.

Unfortunately, our current system of campaign finance and broader government and private sector regulation (or lack thereof) seriously stacks the deck against individuals or small groups who seek

progressive change. It is vital to our democracy that we level that playing field -- and soon. But we can't afford to rest in the meantime. If there's an issue we care about, we have to be willing to fight for it. That requires more than just words; it takes tangible, collective action.

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

Darrin Howell : I'm a firm believer that lasting progressive change won't be possible until the people regain control of our democracy. As a longtime community and political organizer, I have worked hard to bring people together to take collective action on a host of issues important to our democratic process. I have lobbied in support of early voting and same-day registration initiatives, rallied to overturn the Citizens United decision and get big money out of elections, and in several cases exposed some of the fat cats who have tried to influence our process anonymously.

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. With all due respect to legislative leadership, I don't represent Winthrop or Quincy. The Speaker is not my constituent, nor is the Majority Leader. But the people of Dorchester and Roxbury are -- and I will always take action in their best interests. I have never been afraid to speak truth to power, and I don't intend to suddenly find fear once I have "State Representative" in front of my name.

I do think this this approach to committee chairs is worth considering. It would allow constituents to have a vicarious voice in leadership selection -- the officials they elect will have a direct say in who will be best to lead on a given set of issues. Candidates campaign on issues based on the needs of their districts, combined with personal and professional connections to those priorities. So in many ways, this could be "good for democracy".

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?*

Darrin Howell : Yes. Transparent government is the best form of accountability. Far too often decisions are being made that are beneficial to a select few and more than on one occasion those decisions have been unethical, immoral, and even criminal. Individuals are elected and have to be responsible with the decisions and statements they are making because of the interests of the people they are speaking on behalf of.

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

Darrin Howell : 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”?

Darrin Howell : Yes. I am very aware of the costs associated with running for office while also dealing with the financial obligations of being a parent, so I’m all in favor here.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Darrin Howell : Yes.

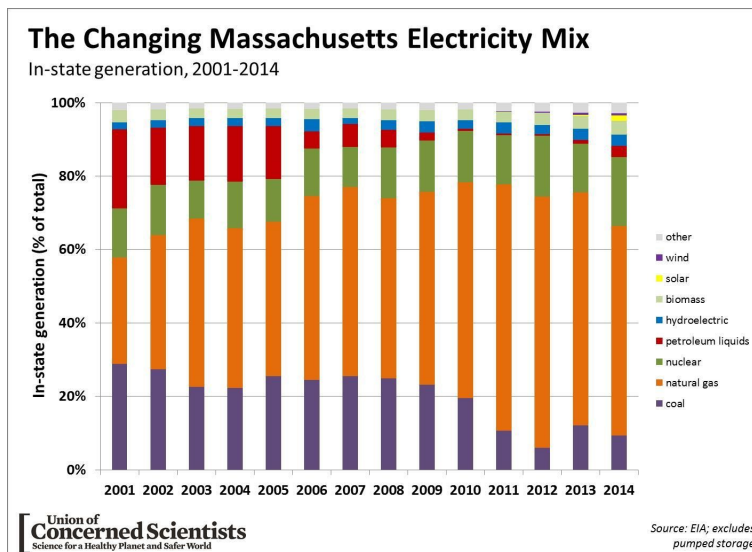
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

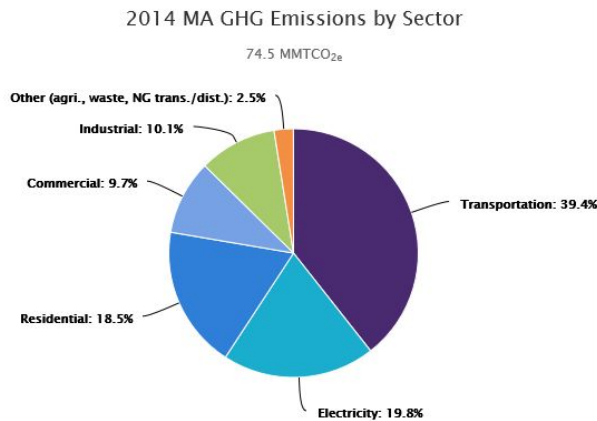
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Darrin Howell : When it comes to the environment and infrastructure in Massachusetts, I’ve long felt that the biggest state-level challenge we face is utter inaction on the policy front. We are a so-called progressive state, and we have plenty of legislators who are more than happy to *talk* about their environmental leadership, but do very little to actually lead and take action to move us forward in a meaningful way. A key example: how can a legislative body dominated by “allies” not ensure Massachusetts is a leader in offshore wind power generation? What’s stopping us? A group of wealthy vacationers who don’t want to look at turbine? My neighbors in Roxbury and Dorchester could care less about the shoreline views of the wealthy when it stands in the way of clean, affordable energy -- and I’m fairly certain much of the rest of the commonwealth feels the same way. So my personal values and principles boil down to this: I’m tired of the excuses; it’s time for action.

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

Darrin Howell : Though I have not served in a specific leadership role with environmental organization, I have frequently worked with organizations like ACE on issues that disproportionately affect urban communities of color. I am particularly concerned about the disparities that persist in my community and across Massachusetts -- siting of the waste management facility, and decisions about bus routes and late- night service being prime examples. Of course, I do what I can to ensure my family minimizes waste and avoids driving whenever possible, and I consider myself to be environmentally conscious.

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

Darrin Howell : 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?*

Darrin Howell : 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?

Darrin Howell : Yes. We are fortunate to be a coastal state for many reasons, including access to a wealth of clean, renewable resources. I strongly feel we should be a leader in offshore wind generation, in particular, though we should explore all available options to expand renewable capacity to cover the entire Commonwealth.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. Further, I would work to oppose other natural gas infrastructure such as the proposed Enbridge compressor station in Weymouth. We have a wealth of clean, renewable options available to us in Massachusetts -- and should prioritize those options.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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?

Darrin Howell : Yes.

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

Darrin Howell : Yes. In the never-ending debate about "who pays for the MBTA/RTAs,"

stakeholders often lose sight of how vital these systems are to individual lives and the health of our broader economy. Public transit isn't a luxury or a "nice to have" in my community; it's a lifeline, and often the only option to get to work, school, medical appointments, etc. The Fair Share Amendment is an important first step at generating progressive revenue for transit, but it cannot be the end of the conversation.

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?*

Darrin Howell : 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.

Darrin Howell : Again, many candidates *talk* about their support for progressive values like those you've outlined in this questionnaire -- and I'm sure you'll hear from plenty. But my advocacy for the priorities we share goes beyond just words; I believe in bringing change through action.

For more than a decade, I have worked on behalf of disenfranchised communities and low-wage workers to advance social and economic justice issues at the local, state and national levels. And I plan to maintain that action-oriented approach as State Representative, working hand-in-hand with individuals and organizations who are at the vanguard of the fight for progressive change. You can always count on me to be a champion for policies that ensure our state remains a safe, healthy and equitable place that welcomes everyone.

I really look forward to speaking further with the Progressive Massachusetts team about these issues -- and to our work together in the months and years to come.