

Drew Russo

11th Essex

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 11th Essex

Party: Democratic

Website: www.drewrusso.org

Twitter: [@DrewRusso781](https://twitter.com/DrewRusso781)

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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](https://www.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

Drew Russo

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

Drew Russo: I am running for State Representative because I have a deep commitment to our communities and a passion to pursue fair, progressive policies that will enhance our quality of life. If elected, I will work for social and economic justice, whether it is advocating for a \$15 minimum wage, working to enact policies that reduce income inequality, and ensuring that all of our citizens have access to a quality public education, the right to organize for their rights as workers, safe and secure neighborhoods, housing that allows them to live with dignity in the community of their choice, the freedom to live without fear regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status, and a compassionate, proactive approach to the opioid epidemic that prioritizes treatment and recovery.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

Drew Russo: As Congressman Tierney's District Outreach Director, I partnered with community members, business leaders, educators, and elected officials throughout Lynn, Nahant, and the other thirty-seven cities and towns of the Sixth Congressional District. The experience taught me that every community is unique and often brings a different set of priorities to the table. It will be important for the next Representative to work hard on a variety of issues affecting Lynn and Nahant, whether it is advocating for Nahanters who oppose the current expansion plans for Northeastern University at East Point or fighting to ensure that Lynn receives the maximum amount of state funding for our schools.

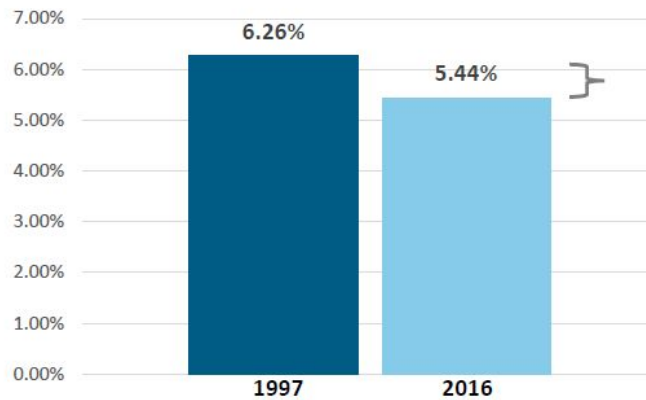
My past experience also includes leading the Lynn Museum/LynnArts, one of the city's foremost arts and culture institutions, years of political activism including service as Vice Chair of the Lynn Democratic City Committee, and national service with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps.

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.

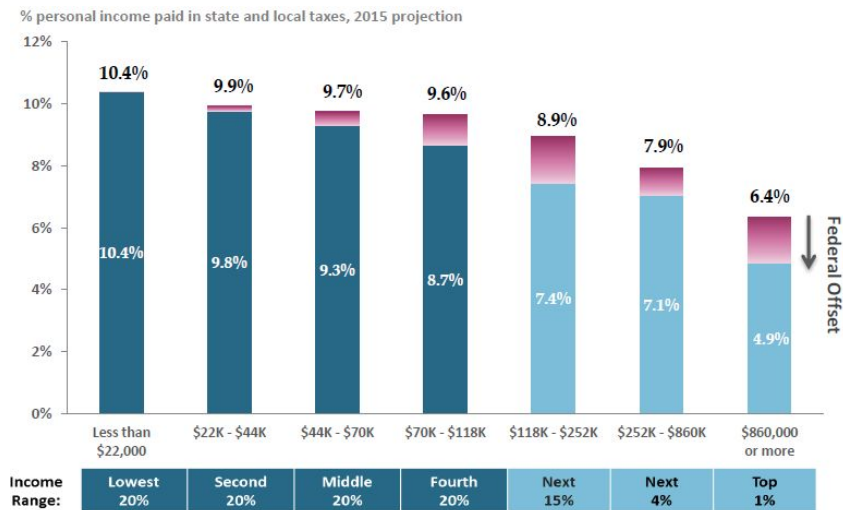
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Drew Russo: When discussing issues of tax revenue / reform, a candidate or legislator's focus should be on what policy will do the most good for the most people. My faith and progressive principles tell me that we must work every day to improve the lot of those around us. At a national level, we've seen "tax reform" in favor of those who have benefitted the most in our economy. In some cases those corporations had a hand in the economic downturn in 2008. That's why I am in full support of Fair Share Amendment. It is the type of forward thinking progressive policy that we need to move Massachusetts forward.

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.).*

Drew Russo: I am proud to have worked for and supported candidates such as Congressman Tierney, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Lynn Mayor Tom McGee, who have worked tirelessly to reduce the burden on working and middle income families.

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?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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?*

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: Yes. Lack of transparency is one of the major challenges facing our government and democracy today; this is particularly true as it concerns the financial special treatment that many corporations receive. The fact that corporations are, for the most part, vehemently opposed to greater transparency regarding their tax credits and other financial benefits received from the "regulatory" system is proof enough that a light needs to be shined into that dark corner.

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?*

Drew Russo: Yes. I believe that all companies should pay a living wage. This is especially true of corporations that benefit from our tax dollars. The definition of "good benefits" is somewhat ambiguous, but I believe it is worth noting that the "best" benefits from a U.S. perspective would be considered terrible by many other countries' standards. Moreover, our idea of "benefits" needs to change in response to other social progress that needs to be made, including to single-payer healthcare.

Health insurance is a right, not a “benefit.”

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

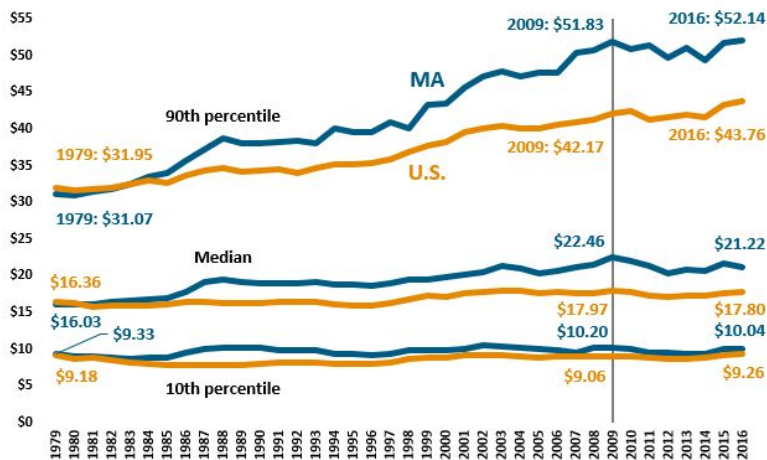
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Drew Russo: Working families have been waiting far too long for a raise. Compounding that issue is the fact that worker productivity has consistently increased. As you know, this means working people are doing more for less. The benefits of our economy have not been felt by the majority of working-class people, although they are undoubtedly contributing to economic growth.

To grow good paying jobs in this state, we must bolster our education system (K-12 and Higher Ed.) so that we continue to attract businesses in search of an educated workforce.

Massachusetts is strongly positioned to be a leader in the high-tech, innovation economy of the future, and we can create new, well-paying jobs by growing the green jobs economy. We've already seen Massachusetts' leadership on solar. With the right leadership, we have an opportunity to lead in many other areas of the green economy.

What's more, with approximately two million middle-skills jobs unfilled in the country, our state's education system can play a role in ensuring that workers have access to education and training that will help them succeed in a changing workforce.

Extreme income inequality is a symptom of decades of regressive tax and economic policies. We must find a balance between living and working in a globally connected economy and readying our current and future workforce for well-paying jobs that will re-grow the middle class and close the income gap. One of the ways we can do this is by investing in a green jobs future.

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.).*

Drew Russo: I am publicly supporting measures that will lead to economic growth including the Fair Share Amendment, \$15 minimum wage, and paid family and medical leave.

3. Increasing Wages.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: Yes.

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?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: Yes.

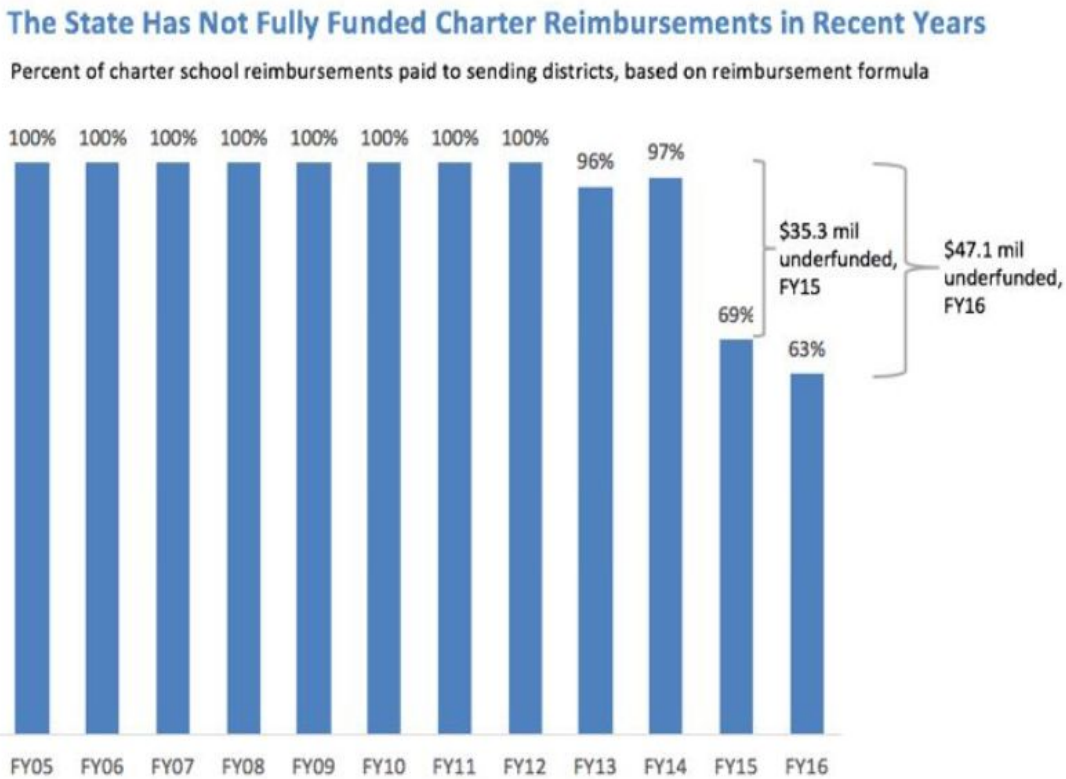
9. **Economic Democracy.** Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?

Drew Russo: Yes.

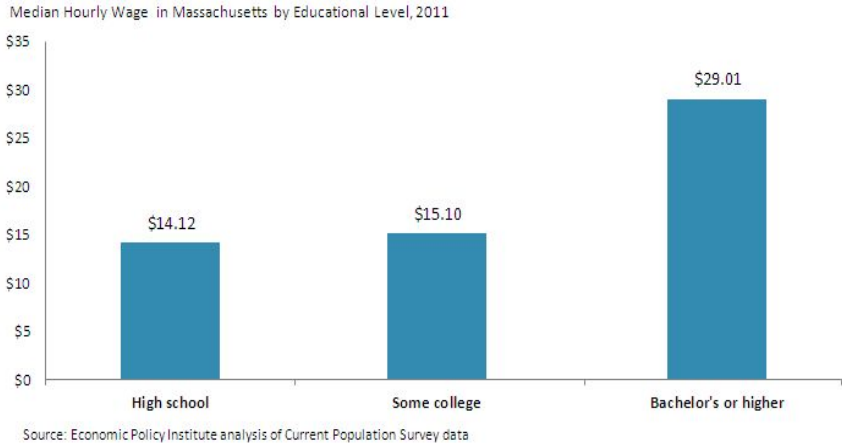
C. EDUCATION

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.

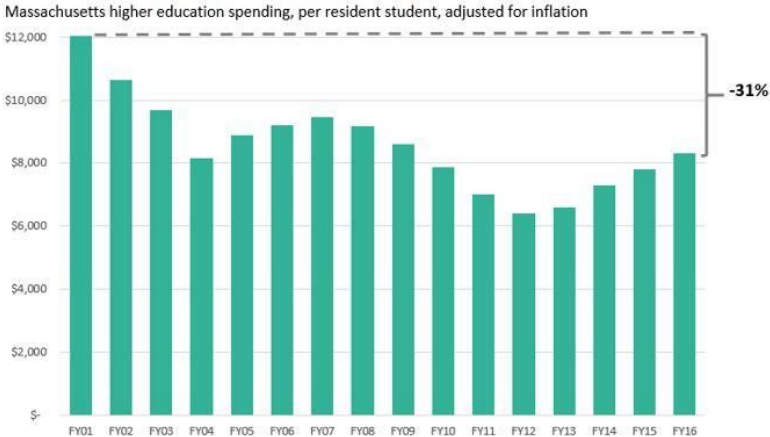


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Drew Russo: Investing in our public schools needs to be one of our highest priorities.

I am encouraged by current legislation that would implement the recommendations of the Massachusetts Foundation Budget Review Commission. I am in favor of increased state funding for districts with vocational education programs (like Lynn Vocational Technical Institute), and increased state funding for districts with high numbers of special needs students and English language learners.

This is the primary reason that I am advocating for the passage of the Fair Share Amendment and reinvest those funds into our public education system, as well as improve our transportation infrastructure.

For similar reasons, I oppose additional charter school expansion. I do not believe that funding should be diverted from public schools to charter schools. That's why I voted against, and publicly supported the campaign opposing, Question 2 which would have lifted the cap on charter schools in 2016.

While we need to find meaningful to assess educational performance, we need to also be careful not to over-test our students or force our educators to teach only to the test. Building the entire learning experience around one series of tests can defeat the purpose of creating a holistic educational environment. Measuring achievement should not come at the expense of a well-rounded education. Additionally, with so many other variables at play, standardized test scores should not be the only measure of teacher or school performance.

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

Drew Russo: Through my work at the Museum/LynnArts, I have had a unique opportunity to observe students and teachers who visit us as part of an ongoing collaboration that brings hundreds of Lynn Public Schools third grade students through our doors. With every new year, I am more and more impressed by the quality, intellectual curiosity, and depth of learning in our third grade classrooms.

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

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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**?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

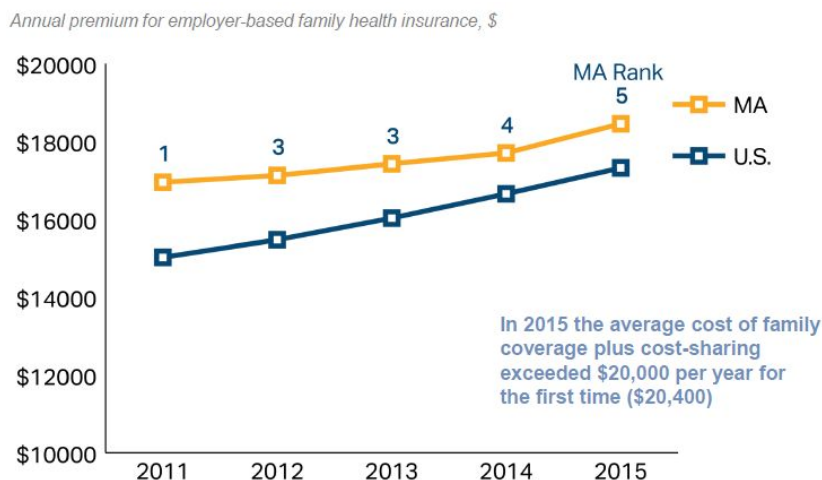
9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?

Drew Russo: 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.*

Drew Russo: I view access to healthcare as a basic human right. We have made good progress in expanding access in this state. Our next policy moves should be aimed at curbing costs in the system and effectively funding for community health centers.

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

Drew Russo: Last year, I joined the board of the Lynn Community Health Center, where I have been a patient for several years. Prior that, I served on the board of the Lynn Shelter Association, and have always stood with organizations looking to expand health care access particularly those with underserved populations.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

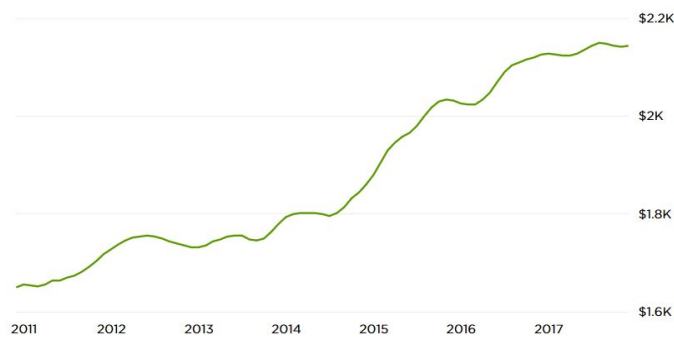
6. *Prescription Drug Pricing.* Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: After college, I did a year of national service with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in Detroit. I worked as a case manager advocating for people who are homeless. Housing is an incredibly important issue to me, considering that background and being cognizant of the many challenges faced by working people in our district. We need to continue funding organizations like the Lynn Shelter Association who strive to provide a pipeline from homelessness to housing and employment. Even still, the rising costs of housing and the impediments to transportation that exist locally make it very difficult for those without a home to recover and retain a sense of dignity, and in many cases, their employment. That is why it is critical for us to find innovative solutions that address the housing and transportation crisis that exists here.

While I believe we need to encourage the development of a certain amount of market rate housing in order to catalyze economic growth, people should not be denied or displaced from living in the community of their choice. Chapter 40B was designed to address the affordable housing question nearly

50 years ago, and yet as we found in a recent Gatehouse Media report, more than 8 in 10 communities still fall short of the 10% requirement.

The “Friendly 40B” approach that Amherst is using, where developers and stakeholders are brought together to create innovative and inclusive plans, should be studied more broadly and the Commonwealth should continue investing in incentives that compel communities to forthrightly address the housing crisis.

Transportation is key to all of this. The Commonwealth has not done enough to invest in making our system truly accessible and affordable. We need to invest in innovative, cost-effective approaches to resolving our transportation challenges in short-term. Water transportation is one of those and I’ll fight for consistent state funding to restore ferry service to Lynn. We can also look at additional rapid bus transit connections, such as the Silver Line, and making more effective and efficient use of the commuter rail service.

If we do not have adequate, affordable housing, and a cost-effective way to get to and from work, Massachusetts is in danger of losing its competitive advantage. Investing in public transit will also encourage job creators to locate outside of the Greater Boston area, giving more opportunities for potential employees in Gateway Cities and suburban communities to find work closer to their place of residence. We are not succeeding in this regard, and need to make bold, transformative investments that give enhanced access to employment and housing throughout the Commonwealth.

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

Drew Russo: As stated above, I have served people who are homeless through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and spent four years on the board of the Lynn Shelter Association. I’ve also been a member of Impact Lynn, a group of local stakeholders who have united to address issues related to educational opportunity, housing access, neighborhood engagement, and public safety.

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

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

b. *The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

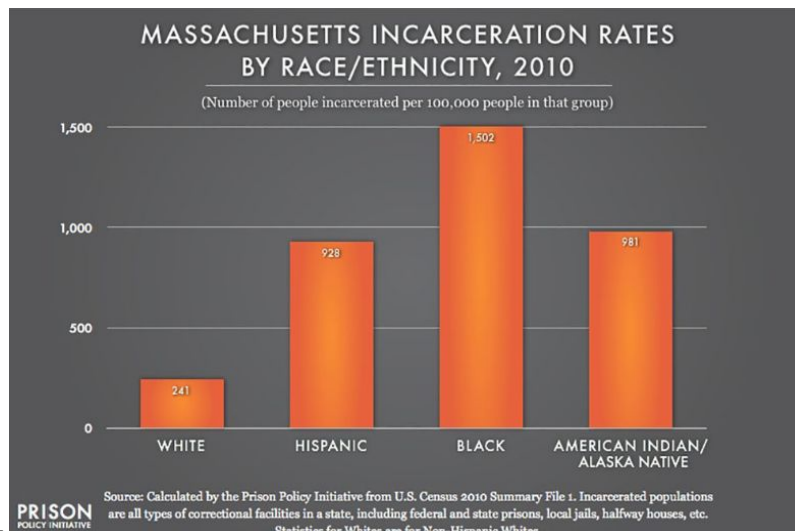
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

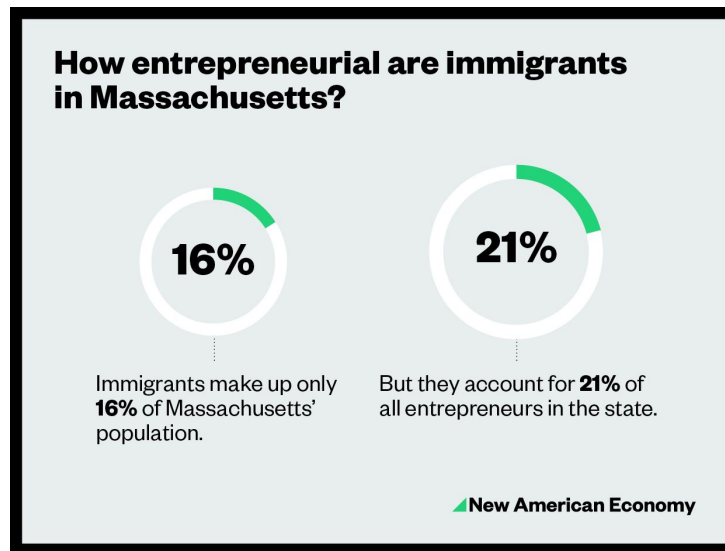
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Drew Russo: Spending a year in Detroit opened my eyes in a very real way to the injustices that continue to exist in our society. For the first time, I was a member of a decided minority and yet continued to hold an uncomfortable balance of power over those I served. It is critical that we recognize that the ongoing struggle for civil rights is fundamental to the pursuit of a fair and just America. We have a considerable amount of work to do, and events like those in Charlottesville last year make it clear that we have a long way to go before true equality can be achieved.

It is important to continue an honest conversation about race, and to work for policies that continue to empower and advance the economic and educational interests of communities of color in our Commonwealth and country.

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

Drew Russo: I have never hesitated to speak out against discrimination of any kind, and in my own church community, worked to create awareness of social justice issues as well as encouraging a climate of welcome and inclusion among our diverse populations.

I strongly support the LGBTQ community, have consistently favored marriage equality since my days as a student at St. Michael's College in Vermont at the height of the civil unions debate, and am proud by the level of LGBTQ inclusion and support within our own campaign.

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?*

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: Yes. Our focus on resolving the opioid epidemic should be centered around treatment and recovery, while holding to account those who are trafficking these deadly and devastating drugs.

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?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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)?*

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes. The vast majority of law enforcement personnel in Massachusetts do an exemplary job, and we've seen the benefits of good community police work in Lynn and Nahant. I do believe that in the small percentage of interactions between police and individual when an officer uses their service weapon occur, we must take a 360-degree look at what led to the shooting. The implementation of an independent review board is a way that we can explore these incidents with impartiality and fairness to all concerned.

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?

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: 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?*

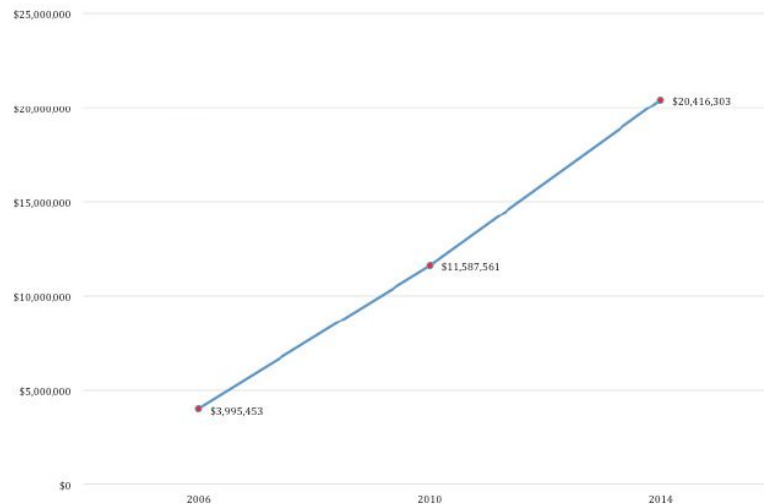
Drew Russo: Yes.

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.*

Drew Russo: I support measures that will improve access to the elective franchise including automatic voter registration, expanded early and mail-in voting periods, the creation of a state holiday for all elections, and transparency throughout the branches of government.

I’m also in favor of comprehensive campaign finance reform, including a return to a Clean Elections style law. Massachusetts, at one time, took a bold step toward public financing of campaigns. If we are going to eliminate barriers to serving in elected office, we have to get serious about the role of money in campaigns.

2. *Please indicate work you personally have done to promote transparency, campaign finance reform,*

legislative rules reform, and access to voting.

Drew Russo: I have signed numerous petitions advocating for the Legislature to act against the Citizens United decision, and worked for political candidates who share similar goals.

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?*

Drew Russo: Yes. I would work with leadership to encourage the highest level of democratic participation within the body.

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?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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"?*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Drew Russo: Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Drew Russo: Yes.

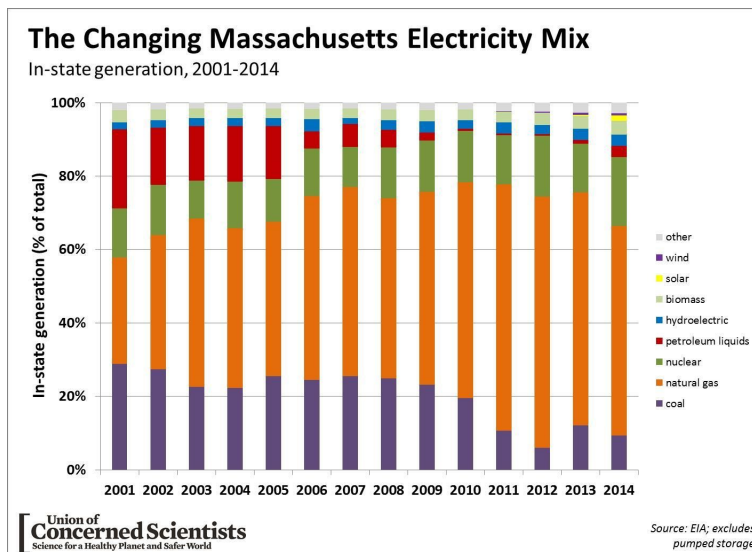
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

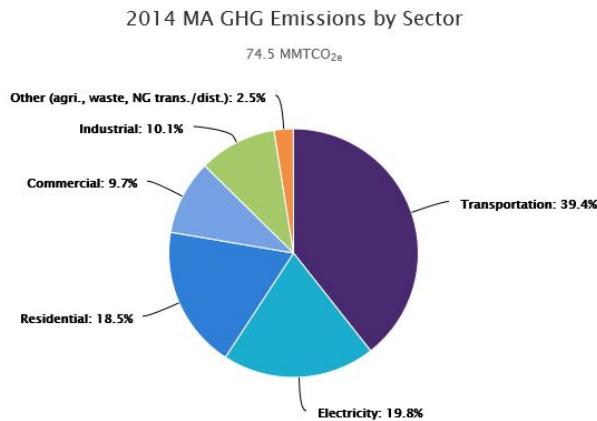
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Drew Russo: I believe the preservation of open space, lack of affordable public transit, and impacts of global climate change especially on our coastal communities are among the greatest challenges facing Massachusetts today.

As a Representative, I will support and introduce legislation to expand transportation funding, move Massachusetts toward greater use of renewable energy sources, and preserve public lands.

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

Drew Russo: My wife and I are active participants in the city's recycling program, have been composting for nearly two years, and have worked with MassSAVE to make our home more energy efficient. I have sought to "act locally" and think globally in terms of my personal impact on the environment. I have made vehicle purchases that reflect my support for increased high average mile per gallon standards. In terms of my personal political activity, I have always supported candidates with stellar environmental voting records.

In my current campaign, I am making the expansion of public transportation a key priority. It makes sense economically and environmentally.

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

Drew Russo: 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?*

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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? **Drew Russo: Yes.**

b. and support efforts to codify environmental justice into law? **Drew Russo: Yes.**

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: Yes.

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

Drew Russo: 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?

Drew Russo: 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.

Drew Russo: I am grateful to Progressive Mass for giving me the opportunity to participate in this process. If elected, I promise to be a thoughtful, proactive, progressive legislator who works to make state government more inclusive and innovative. I respectfully ask for your vote in the Democratic primary on Tuesday, September 4th.