

*Francia Wisniewski*

**1st Franklin**

**State Representative**

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*Endorsement Questionnaire*

**Office Sought:** State Representative

**Legislative District:** 1st Franklin

**Party:** Democratic

**Website:** [ElectFrancia.com](http://ElectFrancia.com)

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

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



**Primary:** September 4

**Election:** November 6

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# Introduction: Progressive Mass

## About

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

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

### Membership

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

### How Endorsements Work

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

## Sources

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*Each section features a chart or graph that illustrates one facet of the issue under discussion and is not intended to be comprehensive. All images and data are from Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center ([massbudget.org](https://massbudget.org)).*

# I. About the Candidate

## Francia Wisnewski

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I am running for office because I want to build an economy that supports working families. My top three priorities are single-payer health care, increased funding for public education and social services, and expanded transportation options for western Massachusetts.

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

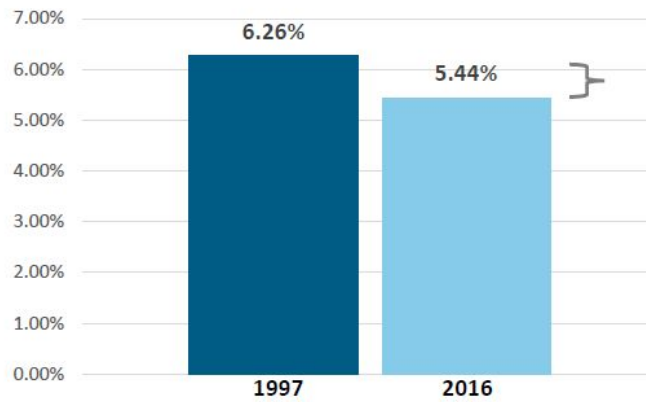
**Francia Wisnewski:** I am one of the few candidates in this race who has served in public office before. I was twice elected to the Greenfield School Committee, where I emphasized transparency and fairness. I currently serve as the chair of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and I am an active member of my Democratic Town Committee. I have also served as a delegate to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention for the last three years.

# 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.

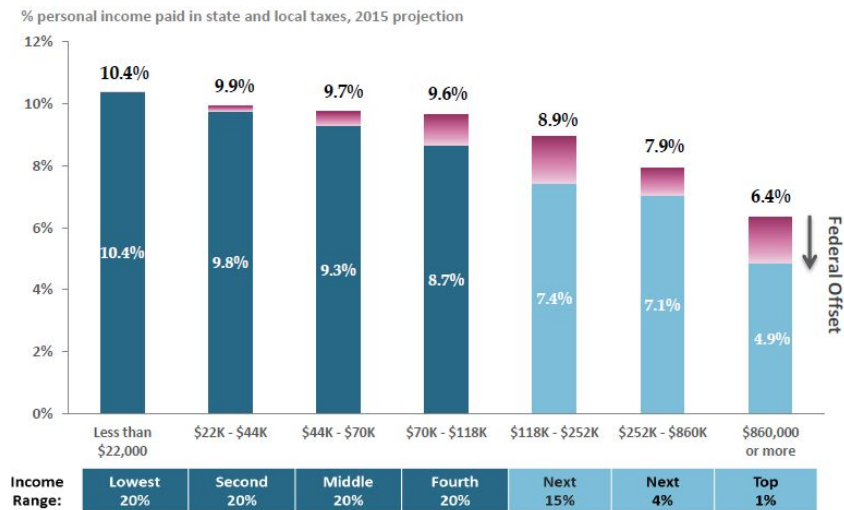
**Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.**

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** I believe that taxes should be more progressive. The workers who drive our economy deserve better compensation, not just in wages, but in healthcare, education for their children, and clean air and water. This can only be achieved through progressive taxation and better investment in services at the state level. I also fully support the Fair Share Amendment on the ballot this November. The highest-earning individuals and corporations in Massachusetts should have an equitable tax burden, rather than paying lower taxes, or--in the case of many local anchor institutions such as hospitals--paying no taxes at all, while being clearly profit-motivated.

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.).*

**Francia Wisnewski:** When I served on the Greenfield School Committee, I worked hard to ensure that our schools were fully funded, and to push back against arguments that the town could not “afford” such funding. I worked closely with members of the Greenfield Town Council to create and build support for creative funding solutions that excluded proposed tax cuts, without increasing the burden on local property owners. It has always been important to me to ensure that my constituents understand the issues and have ample opportunity to inform my policy positions, so I engaged in quite a bit of public education and one-on-one conversations with voters to make sure that people understood the necessary and important public goods that their taxes were paying for. This crucial step is often missing from conversations about taxes.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I support other progressive tax measures such as the tax credits for low-income households and a fully enforced estate tax that holds the wealthy accountable for the often sizable amount of money passed within families.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** 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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** 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?*

**Francia Wisniewski:** 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.”

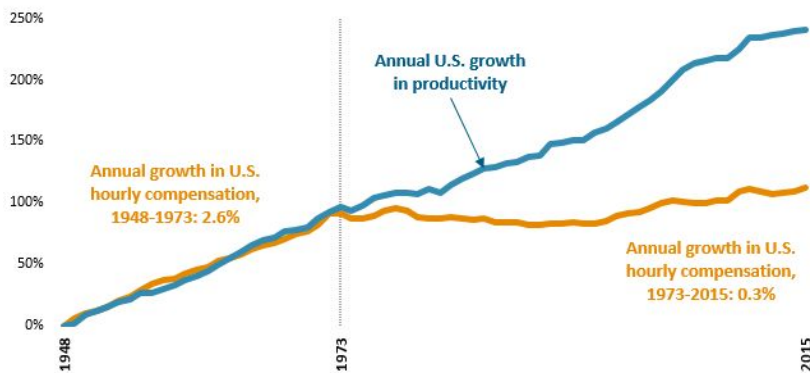
## B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

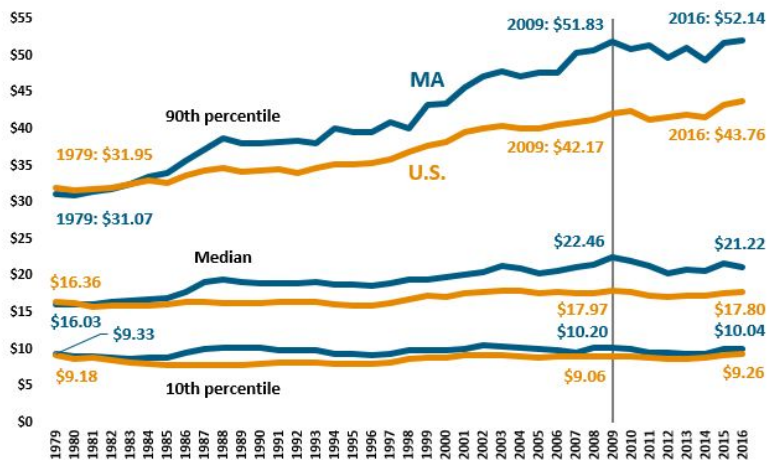
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** I believe the best way to strengthen our economy is to invest in working families. We need to start by raising the minimum wage and providing paid family leave to help stabilize household finances. This will feed back into the economy when families have money to spend. Brick and mortar retail will never recover to the extent that we once saw, but I believe that local agriculture, the arts, and entertainment will thrive if working people are able to afford healthier food and leisure activities.

**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.).*

**Francia Wisnewski:** I have long been a supporter of living wages, single-payer healthcare, and social services that support children and working families. As a Greenfield School Committee member, I advocated for the teachers to receive fair pay and regular salary increases, and fought to keep school nurses from being re-classified as municipal employees, which would have taken away their right to be represented by a union. I have also served on boards including the Franklin Community Coop and Leadership Pioneer Valley, and always worked to ensure that our area non-profits are paying living wages and supporting their employees holistically with good wages, benefits, and growth opportunities. I believe strongly that job growth must not only be counted in terms of the quantity of jobs available, but the quality, and elected officials must support people's overall wellbeing and ability to live with health and dignity, rather than just being concerned with employment statistics.

**3. Increasing Wages.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes.

I support the Raise Up Massachusetts Campaign's efforts to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour and provide Paid Family Leave. These initiatives are an important step towards fighting income inequality.

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

*paid medical leave?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Paid leave is critical for many families confronting some of the most challenging times of their lives. No one should ever have to choose between keeping their job and caring for a loved one. Even such a possibility puts a terrible strain on people whose attention is required elsewhere - caring for a newborn, or helping a family member with a critical illness. Paid leave is a moral stance about prioritizing lives and loved ones over employer profit, and I believe it is a critical step for us to take in Massachusetts.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Organized labor helps balance income inequality by allowing workers to stand together against management whose priorities are profit over people. States with lower union density are poorer, and workers have fewer benefits than workers in states with higher union density. Unions even raise wages and benefits for workers in non-unionized workplaces because employers are forced to compete for workers.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** As chair of the School Committee in Greenfield, I worked to ensure that our educators received a fair contract. I made sure that school nurses were included in our school contract, which was more favorable than the municipal contract that they would have received as municipal employees. I have also walked the picket lines with the nurses at Baystate Franklin over their 18 months of fighting for a fair contract, and I will continue to support them in future contract negotiations.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Contracting and subcontracting have become popular ways for employers to distance themselves from responsibility for the wellbeing of the people carrying out the work of their organizations. I will work to hold businesses responsible for such violations, and to combat efforts to legalize further wage theft, such as current national efforts to legalize tip seizure from tipped employees.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Arbitration suggests that both parties come to a disagreement with equal rights and standing, but that is not the case in situations where employees have been wronged by an employer. If employers are acting fairly and legally, they should have no fear of legal action.

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*

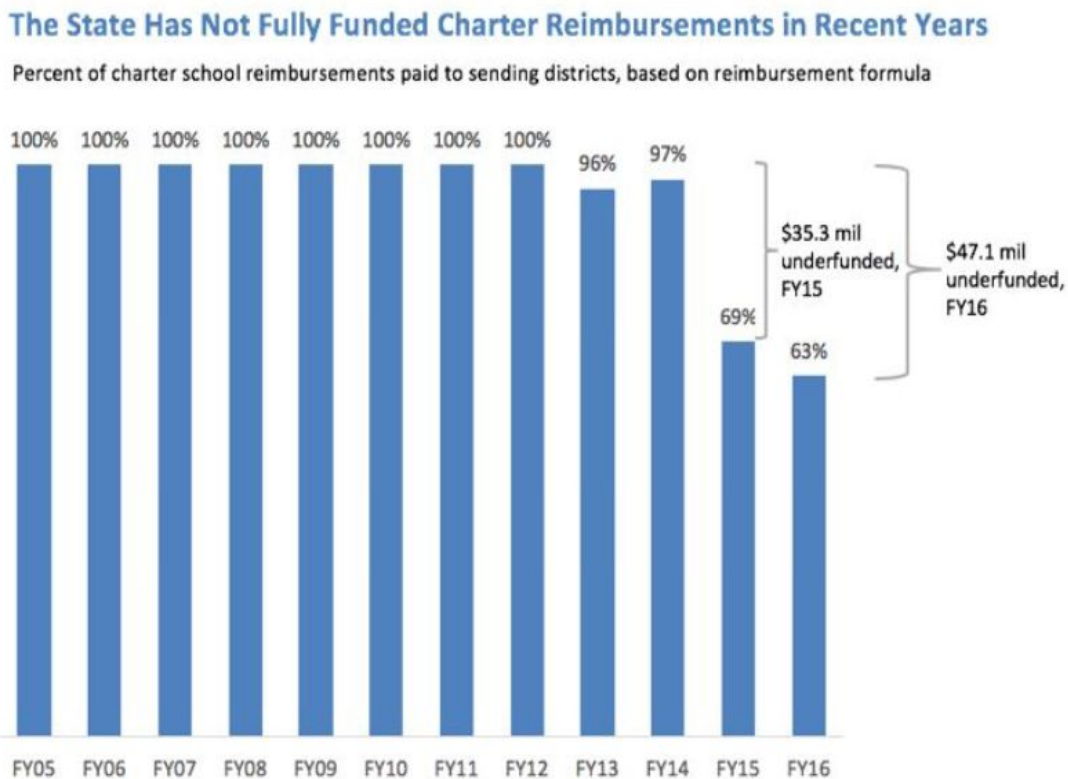
*corporations?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** **Yes.** Western Mass already supports numerous successful cooperatives, including Real Pickles, the Artisan Beverage Cooperative, multiple food coops, a cooperatively owned copy shop (Collective Copies), Pedal People delivery service in Northampton, and others. Worker-owned cooperatives are a vital piece of our economic landscape, and ensure that worker-owners are fully invested in the success of both their business and the ethics and equity with which it serves its community. I believe that worker-owned coops and other models that shift us away from a profit-maximization-focused economic model are critical to the sustainable economic and social viability of our communities.

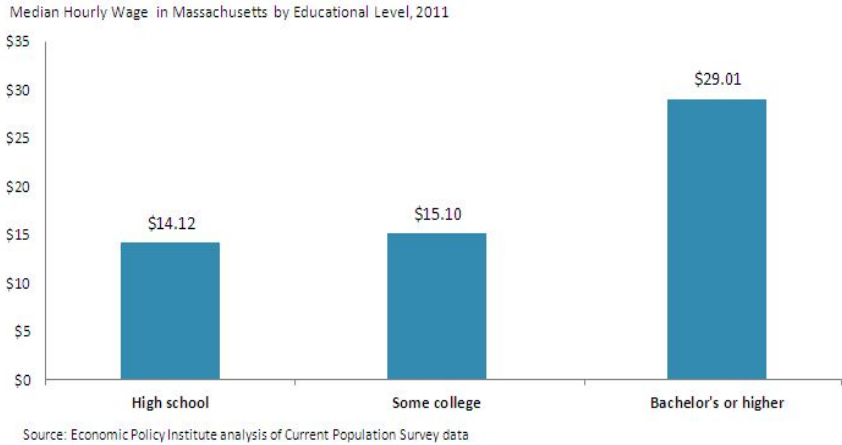
# C. EDUCATION

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.**

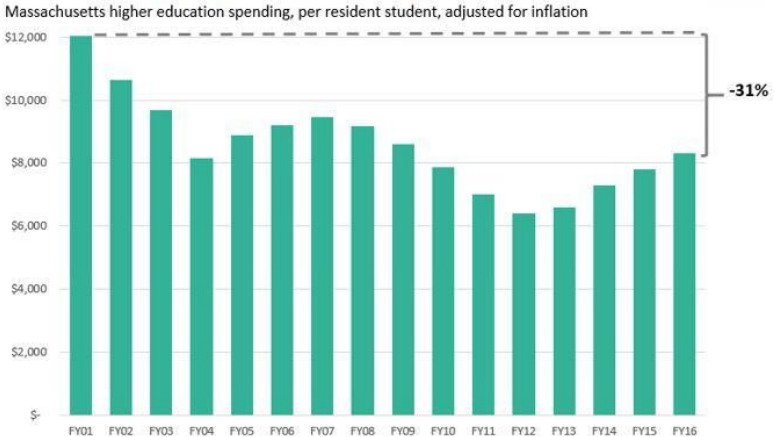


**Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.**



**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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** As an educator, the daughter of two educators, and a mother, I fully support public education. Fully funded public education improves our economy by equipping our young people with the tools they need to succeed, which in turn drives our economy. I do not believe that children's aptitude should be measured through standardized testing, but by their individual abilities. This approach would encourage more young people to pursue skilled labor such as precision manufacturing and careers in green energy. I also believe that charter schools drain scarce resources from our public schools and should be strictly capped.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I served two terms on the School Committee in Greenfield where I had the honor of working closely with our educators and the superintendent to create the best possible learning environment for our students. I also chair the Commission for the Status of Women and Girls where much of our work is focused on educational and economic opportunities for women.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I believe that universal pre-K is crucial to kids' success as well as economic empowerment for working families, especially in single-parent households. Parents need a safe, affordable, nurturing place to leave their children during work, and studies have shown that children who attend preschool fare better in K-12 schools.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. High-stakes testing has had a very detrimental effect on our students, teachers, and school systems in general. Studies show that students' actual learning has suffered as the use of testing has increased, and the level of stress generated by current testing models has a very negative impact. High stakes testing does not prepare students to be good thinkers and citizens; it simply forces them into boxes and demands attention to a certain type of knowledge and skill-building that has been widely shown to be of relatively little use in the long term.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. Chapter 70 funding leaves rural towns like those in my district with scant resources. I will fight for more equitable funding for rural districts in addition to adequate funding throughout the Commonwealth for ELL students, Special Education students, transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction.

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**?*

**Francia Wisniewski: Yes.** We need to maintain strict caps on charter schools to promote better social equality. Charter schools are not subject to the same regulations as public education, and do not adequately serve children with disabilities, children of color, or poor children. Instead they funnel off resources from our public schools while maintaining disproportionately high enrollments among white children from upper-middle class families.

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?*

**Francia Wisniewski: Yes.** I think any schools, and particularly any schools that receive any public funding or support (including tax breaks), must be subject to the same standards of accountability as public 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?

**Francia Wisniewski: Yes.** Worldwide data are clear that the countries with the most comprehensive sex education starting at the youngest ages (i.e. the Netherlands) have the lowest rates of unplanned pregnancy; I think such policies are critical to supporting the healthy development of our young people, not only for the prevention of unplanned pregnancies but also for healthy physical, sexual, and social development of all young people.

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

**Francia Wisniewski: Yes.** I support free tuition to community college and free or reduced tuition to 4-year state universities for all qualified (i.e high school diploma or equivalency) students, regardless of legal background or immigration status.

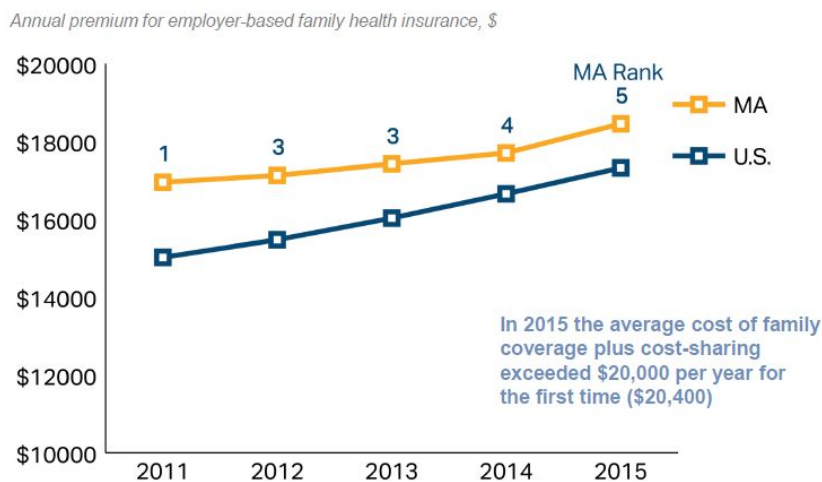
9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?

**Francia Wisniewski: Yes.** Higher education can be an economic equalizer, but only if low-income students are given equal opportunities to succeed.

## 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.*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Working families are at a disadvantage under our current healthcare system. I hope to bridge this gap by supporting single-payer healthcare and paid family and medical leave for all Massachusetts residents.

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



**Francia Wisnewski:** In recent months I have worked with many of my neighbors to collect petition signatures in support of the single-payer healthcare ballot referendum. As State Representative I plan to take this to the next level by supporting legislation to introduce a smooth transition to state-wide single-payer healthcare system, including mental health, vision, dental care, and addiction and recovery support.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. Single-payer healthcare is one of my main policy goals. Working families need and deserve access to free, high-quality healthcare so they can focus on supporting their families without the fear of an unexpected illness destroying their household finances.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I support a woman's right to choose and will work to remove any obstacles that interfere with women's rights and access to healthcare. This also includes a woman's right to consult with her doctor and choose the method of birth control that is right for her.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** 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?*

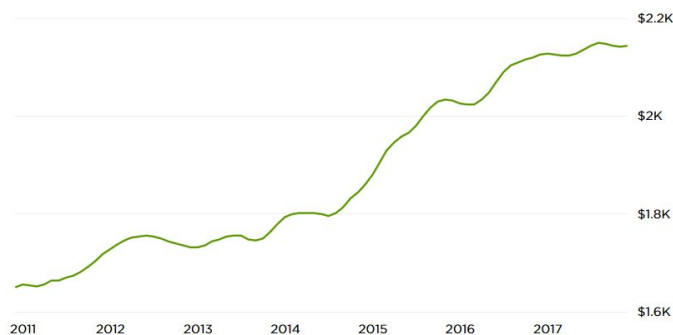
**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. We need greatly increased capacity to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies, and to force transparency around drug pricing and other profit-generating business strategies that are benefitting the drug companies while harming people in need of necessary medications.

## E. HOUSING

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

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



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

**1. Please share your personal values and principles regarding affordable housing.**

*How would you ensure that there is suitable housing for all who need it, within reasonable distance of job opportunities? How would you address the need to link housing, jobs, and transportation? How would you tackle homelessness?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Affordable housing is one of the most pressing needs in western Massachusetts. I believe that raising the minimum wage and enacting single-payer healthcare will alleviate much of the financial burden on renters and homeowners, but we must also enact thoughtful rent controls to ensure that housing costs do not continue to balloon. I will vote to expand housing vouchers to reduce homelessness and provide better funding for programs to alleviate homelessness.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** My past focus has been on education and other issues, not specifically on affordable housing, but I have advocated with my previous city council (when living in Greenfield) and supported efforts and petitions to address the affordable housing gap in our area. In my education work I have also worked with families of young children to access services, including addressing needs and

issues related to challenging housing situations, because the impact of housing challenges can undermine child development and have lasting negative impacts.

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

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

b. *The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

I look forward to learning more about this issue from constituents across the 1st Franklin as I campaign, and working hard to advocate for the housing needs of vulnerable residents throughout the district.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I absolutely believe that we need more mechanisms to prevent foreclosures and keep families in their homes. Our federal government has acted to undo the minimal regulations that were put in place after the 2008 financial crisis, which leaves us vulnerable to another housing bubble and in real danger of further economic recession. As a state, Massachusetts should do everything in our power to prevent such a crisis from recurring.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I am proud that Massachusetts has relatively strong support for tenants' rights, compared to many states, but we can do more. As with foreclosure, I think it should be difficult to turn someone out on the street unless they are in clear violation of laws or contracts (such as a lease). Collecting eviction data is crucial to understanding evictions across the state and doing a better job to prevent them.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I look forward to learning more about this important issue and how to apply these questions to the mostly-rural communities of the 1st Franklin district.

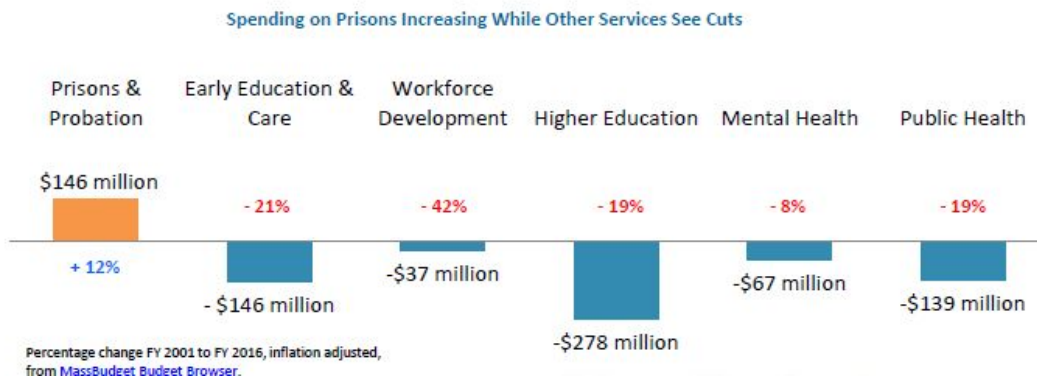
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I look forward to learning more about this important issue.

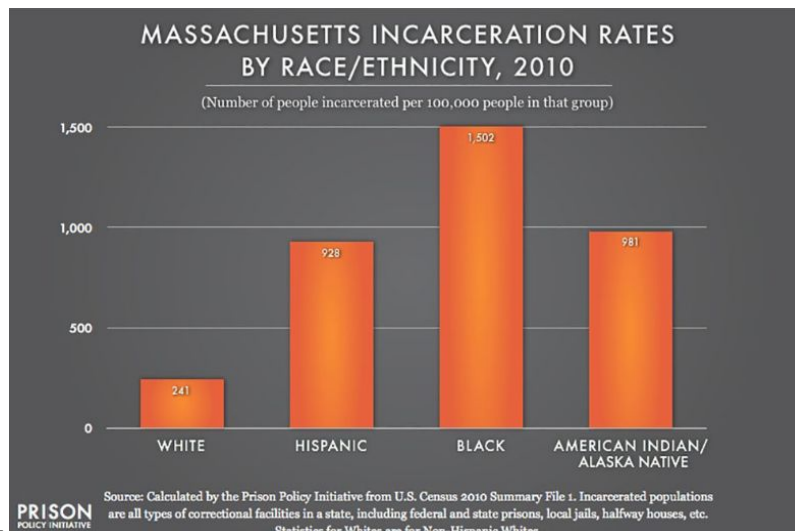
# F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

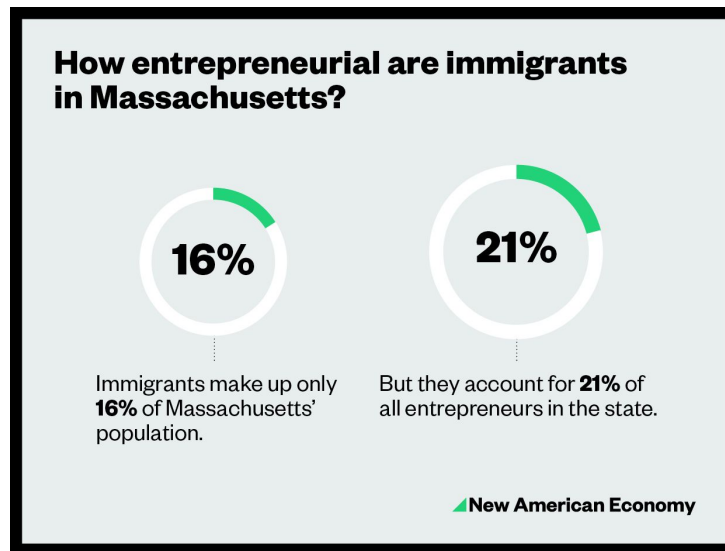
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

**Francia Wisnewski:** It is no secret that people of color face obstacles that white people rarely encounter. We need more people of color in leadership positions to help bring these issues to light, to model better racial equality in our society, and to inspire children of color to continue to break down barriers.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I have spent my entire adult life breaking down barriers of racial and gender inequality. As a Latina and an immigrant, I have always needed to work hard to overcome racism and stereotypes, and as a woman I also face sexism head on. I am the Chair of the Hampshire Franklin Commission for the Status of Women and Girls where I advocate for legislation and programming that supports women's rights. I am a tireless advocate and I will never stop working for a more equal society.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. Our nation has come a long way in recent years to support trans people's rights, and we must not move backward. I will work to encourage voters in 2018 to reject the repeal proposal, and will always encourage inclusivity, education, and the enforcement of equal rights for all people including trans people.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. Western Massachusetts has a vibrant LGBTQ community and I wouldn't have it any other way. We need to support LGBTQ youth and invite them to celebrate their identities,

not shame them and force them to deny who they are.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Criminalization only further punishes the victims of the opioid crisis. We need to address those who suffer from substance abuse disorders with care and compassion, not punishment. This means investing in programs that aid in recover and expanding outreach.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** We need significant sentencing reform and reduction in incarceration for juveniles and in general. Imprisonment should be the last resort. In addition, it is well known that incarceration is disproportionately applied to non-white individuals, particularly for minor drug and offenses. I believe that Massachusetts should review juveniles sentences, especially for minor drug convictions, and make every effort to create alternative pathways for those individuals. Re-entry processes must also be better staffed and funded, and incentives created for employers to hire recently incarcerated individuals, so that they have more and better options upon release.

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)?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** In general I support such laws, but I also believe that cases should be examined on their individual merits. While there may only be a few years separating teens in a relationship with one another, the difference in developmental stages and power dynamics can still be significant, and I will work to ensure that young people are both protected and educated appropriately (including comprehensive age-appropriate sex education).

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I believe that solitary confinement is an inhumane measure and ultimately should be eliminated entirely. In the meantime, it should absolutely be restricted as described above, and should require higher standards of justification for its use at any point.

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

*shootings in the Commonwealth?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. It is clear from state and national statistics that police violence, including shootings, disproportionately target Black and other non-white people, as well as mentally ill individuals. There must be strong accountability, as well as training for law enforcement on implicit bias and anti-racist policing. Lethal force by police is far less common in other Western countries than it is in the United States, and there is no excuse for the level of violence and force deployed by police departments. It is something I will work to shed light on and counteract as a legislator.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. I believe that excessive use of force by police departments is very related to this militarization. I would certainly support greater transparency surrounding the local purchase of such equipment.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. In 2017 I organized with many of my neighbors to help pass a Safe City ordinance in Greenfield, which unfortunately did not pass. Passing The Safe Communities Act at the state level would create a safer community for everyone in Massachusetts, regardless of their immigration status, and is of the utmost importance.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Yes. The more that drivers on our roads are tested and licensed, the safer all drivers, passengers and pedestrians will be. Particularly in our rural communities, many people drive whether licensed or not, because there are few or no other options for getting where someone needs to go. It should be our utmost priority that they and everyone else on the roads are safe.



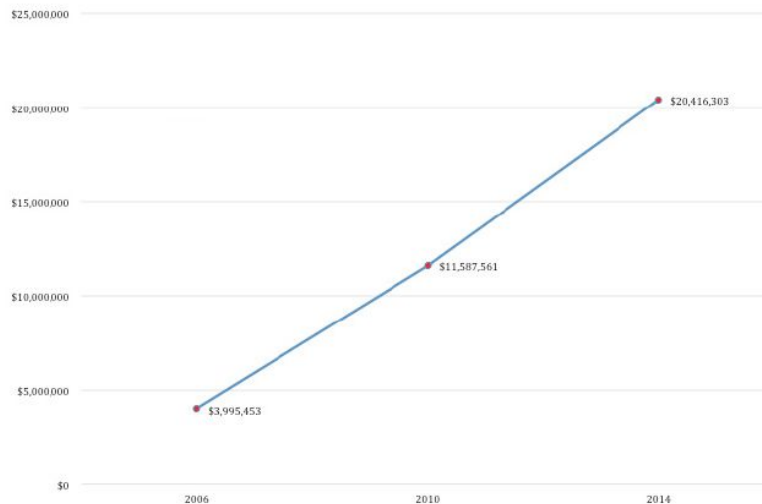
# G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY

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

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

**Figure 1: MA Independent Expenditure Totals**



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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I believe that democracy works best when everyone participates. I encourage people to follow local politics, not just national, because local races have such an important impact on day to day life in our communities.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I have helped organize candidate forums, Get Out The Vote activities, and “meet n greets” for local races in my community. As a member of Town Meeting in Montague I also reach out

to my neighbors to become more involved in our democracy.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** The Massachusetts Legislature has long operated in a way that emphasizes internal power and longevity rather than fresh ideas and options. I believe that the current structure creates opportunities for back-room deals and power-brokering that are unhealthy for our 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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** The amount of money required to run a campaign has created a situation in which wealthy people are far more able and likely to run for office than anyone else. As a non-wealthy candidate, I devote many hours a week to fundraising, and that is time that would be much better spent engaging voters on the issues. Public financing for elections would alleviate some of these challenges.

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"?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I have long campaigned for this policy, and was thrilled to see the recent FEC decision in favor.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

b. *Automatic voter registration*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

Voting should be as easy as possible for everyone who is eligible! It is the backbone of our democracy. I strongly support measures such as automatic registration and the expansion of early voting to all elections, and would also support moving election day so that it might fall on a weekend when voting

would not conflict with busy workday schedules.

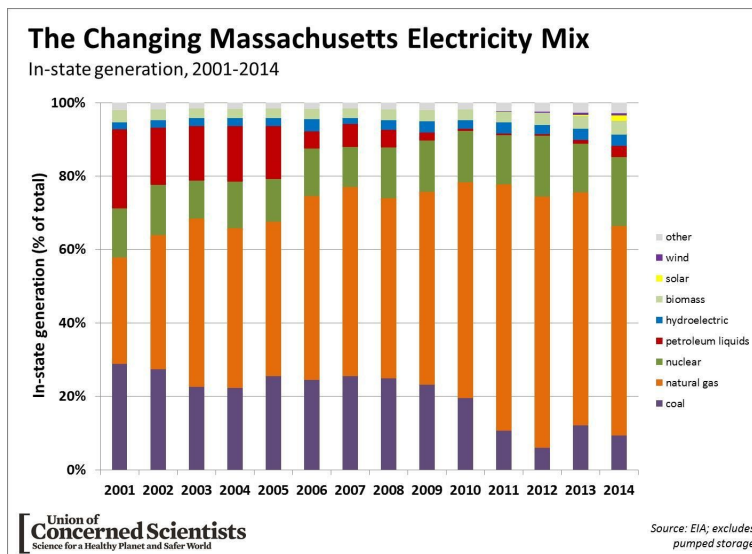
# H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

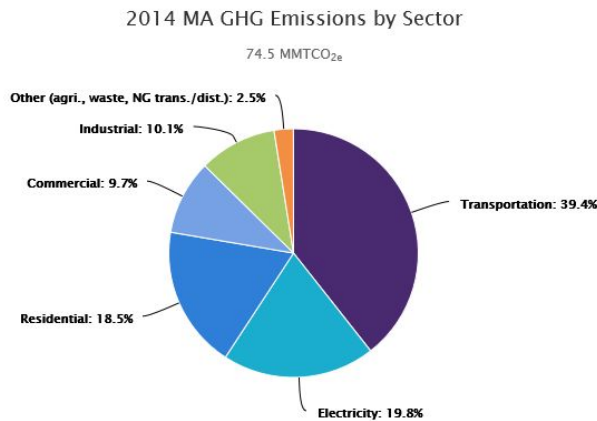
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

**Francia Wisnewski:** We need to protect our environmental wealth in western Massachusetts by exploring renewable energy and investing in green infrastructure. The lack of public transportation in my region encourages driving culture and contributes to increased greenhouse gases.

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

**Francia Wisnewski:** I have long been a donor and volunteer for local environmental efforts such as the Mount Grace Land Trust, and will work hard as a Representative to protect and conserve land and invest in smart and sustainable infrastructure, including the expansion of funding to our Regional Transit Authorities, and the conversion of busses to electric power.

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I supported the proposed plastic bag ban when I was a Greenfield resident, and would support such a ban statewide. We know that disposable plastic bags have had a devastating effect on ecosystems and wildlife, and we also know that communities that have implemented bans have seen few ill effects.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I want to see Massachusetts become a leader in solar power, particularly community solar, which opens the options and benefits of solar power beyond those who have the initial capital and well-situated roofs to install solar on their own homes. Massachusetts should continue to incentivize solar energy for homes, as well as rental properties, and should also invest in solar use on public buildings and schools.

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?

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** In addition to supporting solar energy, I also support off-shore wind. All of these issues have equity aspects - those who get to say “no” to energy generation projects that may pollute or impact their neighborhood, health, and property values are often only the wealthiest people in Massachusetts and beyond. We must find equitable and renewable energy sources and implement them widely in Massachusetts, immediately.

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?

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

See above - I am very concerned with the equity and justice aspects of siting of energy projects, transparency of decision making, and the health and wellbeing of low-income and non-white communities.

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Gas is a dying industry that requires violent and harmful production practices and is dependent on old and leaking infrastructure. We must look forward to energy sources that are renewable, non-harmful, and not profit-based. Expanding gas infrastructure is looking backwards. In addition, I believe that gas companies must be held accountable and responsible for the costs of current infrastructure repairs.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.**

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** Carbon pricing is necessary and possible. I would absolutely support the current proposal to introduce carbon pricing in MA, and I would encourage legislators to make ours the boldest carbon pricing scheme in the U.S.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I think municipal or cooperative utilities, including community solar, are an important piece of addressing climate change and our energy needs.

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

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** I am very supportive of expanded funding, and would also work to see the expansion of east-west rail throughout the state, not only Boston-Springfield, but Leominster-Greenfield (-Albany), and Boston-Worcester-Northampton-Pittsfield. This would be a game-changer for commuters and travelers around the state and all of New England.

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?*

**Francia Wisnewski: Yes.** The RTAs must be fully funded. Many people rely on them as their only option for transportation, and the reduction of service means people can't get to work, can't take their kids to doctor appointments, or accomplish other key tasks. RTA service should also be expanded so that it reaches beyond major corridors and serves the most rural parts of the state, including the 1st Franklin district.

# 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.*

**Francia Wisnewski:** Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to discussing further how I will represent the people and progressive values of the 1st Franklin!