

Maria Robinson

6th Middlesex

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 6th Middlesex

Party: Democratic

Website: www.voteMariaRobinson.com

Twitter: [@maria4staterep](https://twitter.com/maria4staterep)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/maria4staterep/>



Primary: September 4

Election: November 6

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Introduction: Progressive Mass

About

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

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

Membership

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

How Endorsements Work

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

Sources

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

I. About the Candidate

Maria Robinson

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

Maria Robinson: I am running for office because I love Framingham, I am committed to living here for a very long time (I have recently moved my aging parents to live with us so we can care for them), and I'm invested in my community. I want to focus on ensuring that Framingham receives its fair share of the budget (particularly in K-12 education), that we grow the local economy, and that we redouble our efforts to provide reliable and affordable public transportation.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

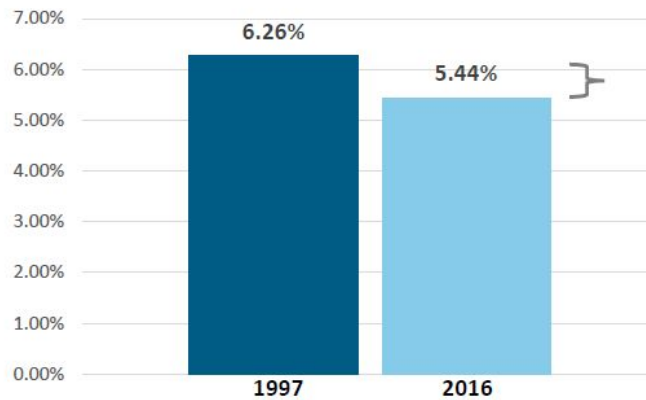
Maria Robinson: I have spent the past decade of my career working on clean energy policy across the country. I have worked with legislators, regulators, governors, and state agencies from blue California to red Florida on adopting renewable energy and energy efficiency policy. I understand how influential the legislature can be, but also I recognize how a lax legislature can lead to bad results for residents.

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.

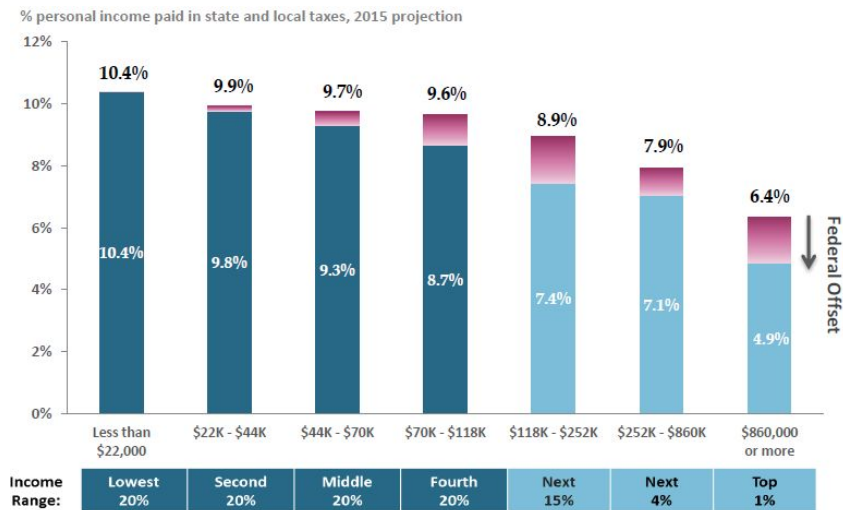
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Massachusetts needs significant tax reform, ideally through a local income tax instead of the existing regressive tax system. In addition to the inability to fund new priorities as mentioned above, we have too many unfunded mandates in cities and towns across the Commonwealth that require financial support.

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

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

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. This is particularly important recognizing that the efforts to support GE have led to fewer jobs than anticipated. I fear a similar result with Amazon potentially moving in to the state.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. I would also like to see these companies provide a long-term plan for increasing the living wage to adjust for inflation.

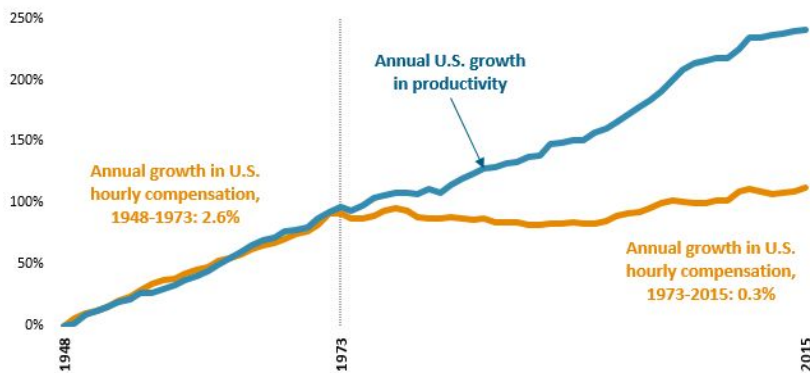
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

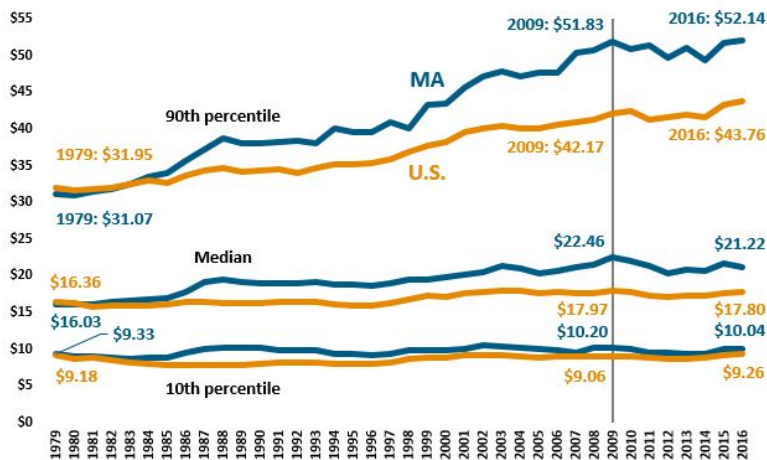
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Maria Robinson: Income inequality is one of the biggest issues facing us right now. It is the cause of many of the issues facing our lower and middle classes, as we see the cost of everything -- housing, health care, food -- rise, while wages remain stagnant. One sector that has great potential is the trades; there will always be a need for trades such as plumbing and welding (which only require limited education beyond a high school degree), yet we do not often present apprenticeships as having the same cache as a college degree to our students. I would work to educate our students about these kinds of careers early on in order to help spur their interest, plus I would make more information available to parents, who might be encouraging their children to take on college debt instead of pursuing a lucrative career in the trades.

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.).*

Maria Robinson: You can read some of my blogs at blog.aee.net/mariarobinson for my work at Advanced Energy Economy, where we advocate for legislation that expands the market for advanced energy, thus providing new, high-paying jobs in an industry that is likely to be secure in our lifetime.

3. Increasing Wages.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. I am happy to see this included in the grand bargain, but I am sorely disappointed to see the change in time-and-a-half pay on Sundays and holidays. My family relied on time-and-a-half for extra income, as do many families now.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. I am the proud child of two long-time union members (letter carriers and social

workers) and sat through countless union meetings as a child, watching as they argued for minimal wage increases and expanded benefits.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. The right to work campaign is lethal to the American economy, and I would oppose any effort to bring any similar kind of campaign to Massachusetts.

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?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

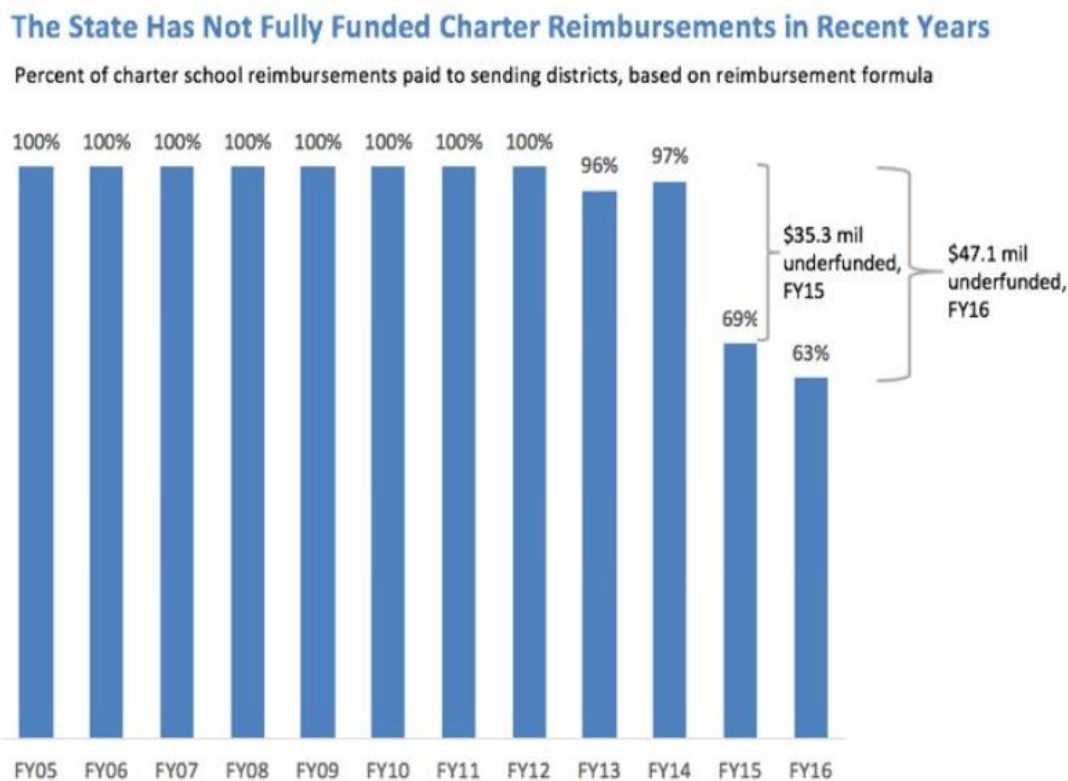
9. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

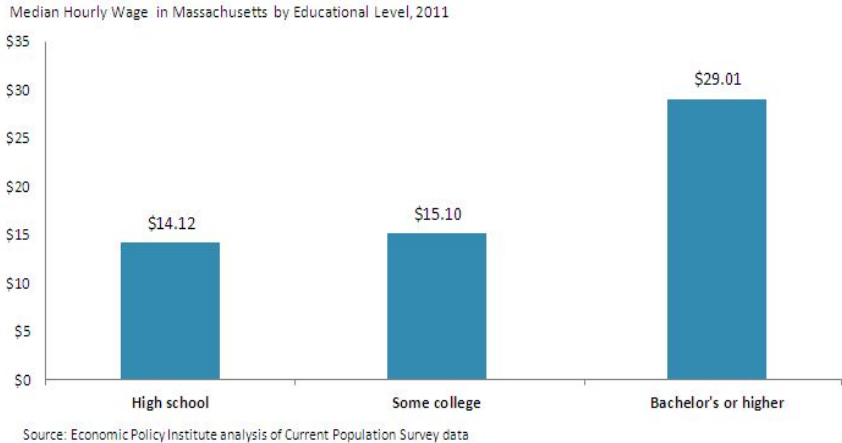
C. EDUCATION

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.

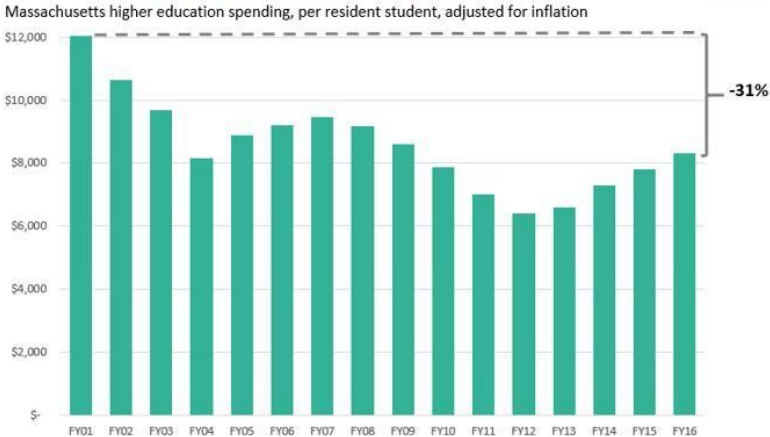


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Maria Robinson: Massachusetts' high quality public education is what sets it apart from the rest of the country and is the #1 reason why I chose to settle my family in the Commonwealth. Having an informed populace is key to having an engaged populace that can reason through policy proposals and better understand how to best help our economy. What we struggle with is a push for privatization through charter schools. Framingham is home to a middle school charter, where many of my friends' children attend school. It's not necessarily a bad school, and I believe many of those students are well educated. What I struggle with is the amount of funding (~\$14k/student) being taken from our public school budget. I think the funding per student needs to be recalculated, taking out static costs (such as heating) and only include variable costs per student. Also, compare that cost per student to the amount school districts receive for the average METCO student - \$4.1k/student. We need consistency across the board for calculating the actual cost of educating our students.

2. *Optional/As Applicable: Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on public education?*
3. *Universal Pre-K. Would you support creating universal, free Pre-K, accessible to any resident of Massachusetts, integrated into the public school system?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. My two children attend public school, and I truly believe the MCAS system does not adequately judge their or their teachers' performance.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. Framingham is not receiving enough funding for the large number of ELL students we have in our district, plus we are not being fully reimbursed for special education costs under the circuit breaker policy. I believe Framingham needs the state to fully fund the circuit breaker as well as adjust the Foundation Budget.

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?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes. I make an effort to talk about our residents rather than our citizens. This is a conscious choice because I believe our undocumented neighbors should have the same benefits as citizens.

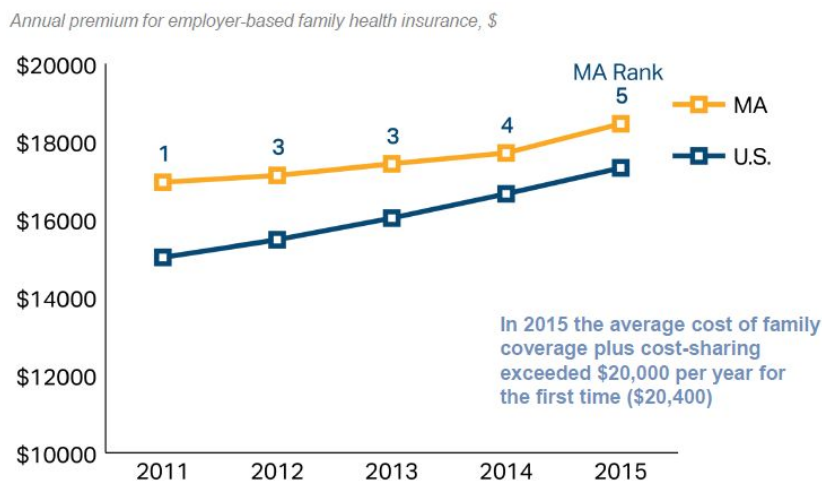
9. ***Tuition-Free Higher Education.** Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. Yes, and we can work to make the higher education system more efficient through group procurement of expenditures such as electricity/other utilities, textbooks, and office supplies. I also do not want the tuition-free education to come at the cost of reducing tenure opportunities for faculty or greater reduction in the salaries of adjuncts.

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.*

Maria Robinson: Affordable health care should be a right in this state, if not this country. Families should not have to choose between putting food on the table or paying an unexpected medical bill. Moreover, families should not have to spend hours on the phone dealing with billing issues or keep changing providers due to the ever-changing demands of insurance providers.

I fully support the bill currently in the Legislature that reduces or eliminates the cost of Medicare Part B and puts a cap on prescription costs under Medicare Part D. Our seniors deserve to afford housing and

health care -- they should not have to choose.

Also, a brief anecdote:

My children are still legally within the care of DCF until their adoption is finalized. They recently changed (with little warning) many MassHealth plans, forcing us to spend many hours on the phone with MassHealth (with an average wait time of 3 hours, which would be impossible for most people working full-time jobs) and finding new providers, which was particularly disruptive to my son's behavioral health care.

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

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: 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?

Maria Robinson: Yes. Dental care is my parents' highest health care cost due to lack of adequate dental insurance options available. Unfortunately, because adequate preventative dental care was lacking in the baby boomer generation, many seniors are in a similar position.

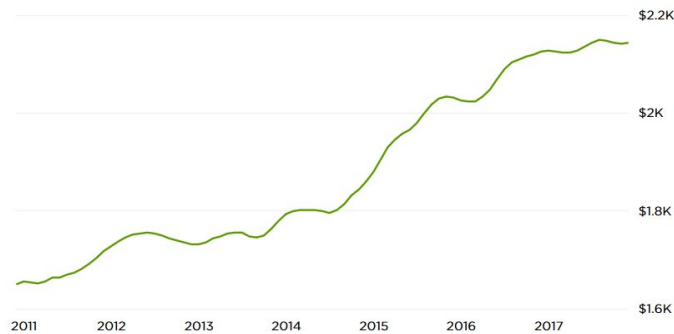
6. **Prescription Drug Pricing.** Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?

Maria Robinson: Yes. Prescription drug costs are my highest health care cost, and even when I do research through my insurance's website, the cost is always significantly higher than I anticipated. It often feels like there is no transparency whatsoever.

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?

Maria Robinson: Housing and transportation are inextricably linked in my city of Framingham. With the MWRTA not operating on Sundays or holidays, many workers are faced with the option of spending more on housing in order to work more hours, or they could live further away from commercial centers but have to use their pay to take a cab to work on days the buses are not running.

As the cost of housing rises dramatically, Framingham residents are being priced out of their own neighborhoods, largely through increased property tax. If a person wanted to stay in Framingham near her support system at an assisted living center, she could be paying upwards of \$5k/month, which is unsustainable for most of our residents. We need to find more ways to abate property taxes for our senior population.

We need a viable, reliable source of public transportation. We could attract people who work near South Station to come live at the apartments being built near our commuter rail station; however, that

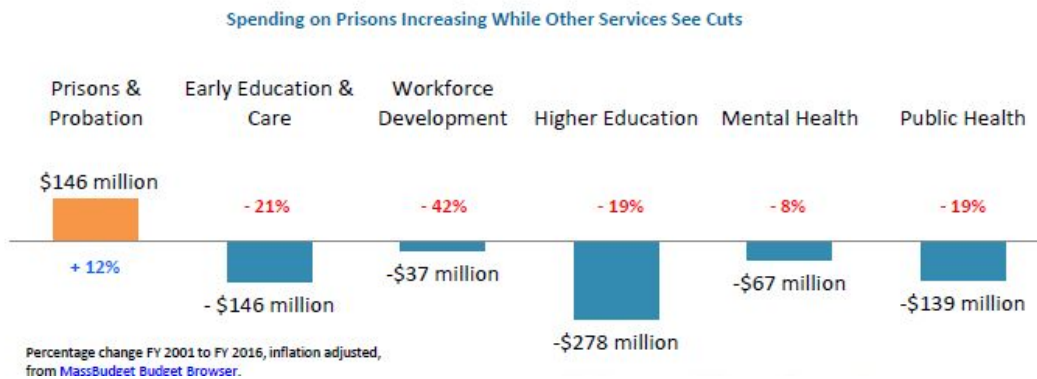
relies on the commuter rail bringing workers to Boston on time, which is rarely the case. We need to invest in the commuter rail (and actually charge fares; I can't tell you the number of times I've ridden the commuter rail without being asked for my ticket) and in local regional public transit.

2. **Optional/As Applicable:** Please indicate work you personally have done to advance your principles on housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).
3. **Funding.** Do you support increasing funding for...
 - a. The creation of new units of affordable housing, especially low-income units?
Maria Robinson: Yes.
 - b. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program? **Maria Robinson: Yes.**
 - c. Matching funds for the Community Preservation Act (via fees from the Registry of Deeds)?
Maria Robinson: 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?
Maria Robinson: Yes.
5. **Foreclosure Prevention.** Do you support a requirement that banks mediate in good faith with homeowners to seek alternatives before beginning foreclosure proceedings?
Maria Robinson: 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?
Maria Robinson: 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?
Maria Robinson: 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?
Maria Robinson: Yes.

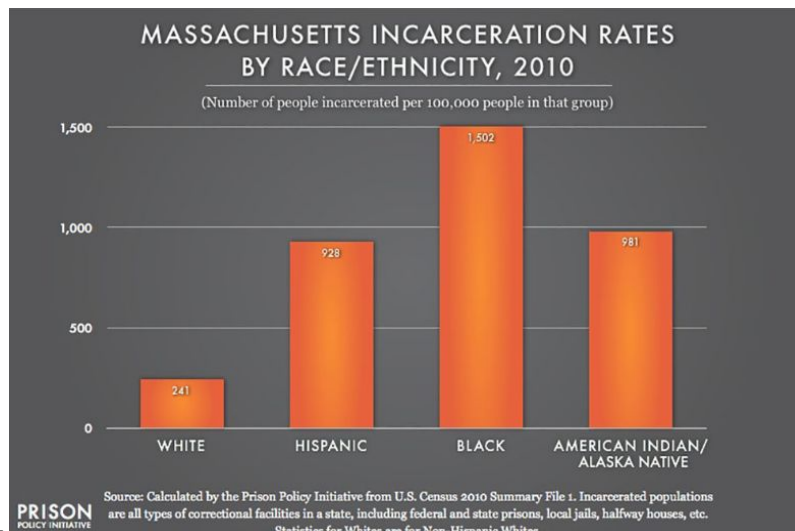
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

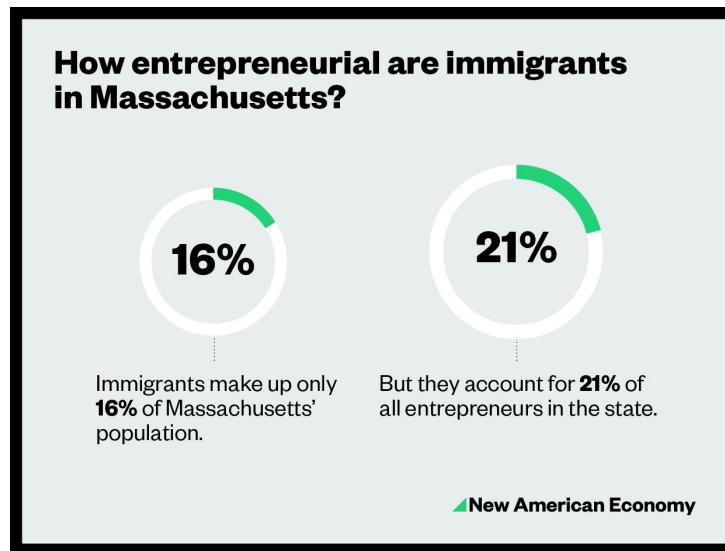
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Maria Robinson: Massachusetts needs to continue being a leader on these issues and to be a state where people of any race or gender feels safe. We continue to see our non-white and non-cis-straight population treated without dignity, without respect, and without due process. Massachusetts needs to lead by example, keeping our police force focused on protecting locally, by being welcoming to all people, and by enacting laws that protect our most vulnerable instead of putting them in jail or in conversion therapy.

Also, we need to ensure that women are being paid equally for their work. I would love to see the programs started in Boston spread to the rest of the Commonwealth.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes. I am openly and widely advocating for protection of this legislation in my campaign.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. It's hard to believe we have not banned conversion therapy yet. We need to keep providing additional resources to our LGBTQ+ youth to ensure they feel a part of their communities.

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?

Maria Robinson: Yes. Mandatory minimums also lead to more children being taken into the custody of DCF, which is facing a crisis of their case workers being overloaded and understaffed. Not only do we need to eliminate mandatory minimums, but we need to support these linked state agencies that deal with the effects of policies that result in more residents in jail.

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?*

Maria Robinson: 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)?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes. Ideally this review board would also be balanced in terms of race, gender, and political party. I would actually like to see more appointed boards across Massachusetts have these requirements, which exist in other states.

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?*

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. This aligns well with our police chief's ethos, which is to focus on preventing and reporting local crimes.

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?*

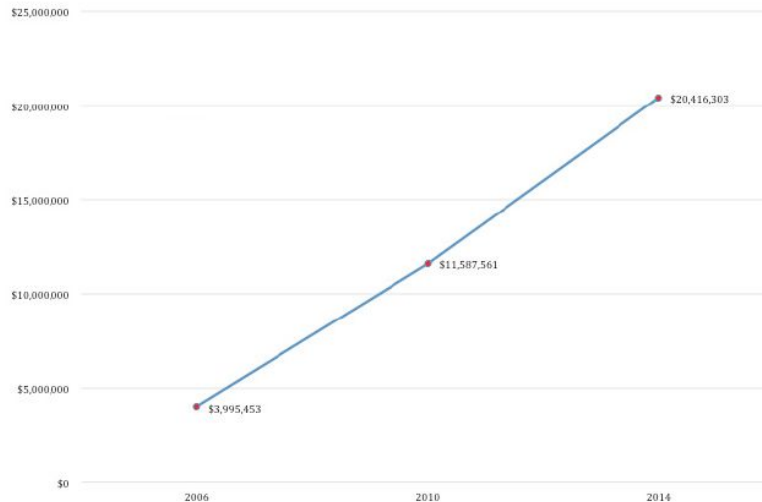
Maria Robinson: Yes. I believe enacting the Safe Driving Act would make the roads safer and provide additional access to much-needed resources for our immigrant population

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.*

Maria Robinson: I support automatic voter registration, same-day registration, and early voting -- as long as adequate resources are provided to city and town clerks.

In my work with state legislatures, I see how nearly all the power is held by just a few people. It is almost preposterous that we have representatives beyond the leadership roles, because most legislators believe their ""hands are tied"" because of the instructions they receive from leadership. We need to reduce the amount of power concentrated in the hands of the few and spread out responsibilities among more members.

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

legislative rules reform, and access to voting.

Maria Robinson: I've been a supporter of voting access organizations such as iVote and Let America Vote.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: 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"?*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Maria Robinson: Yes.

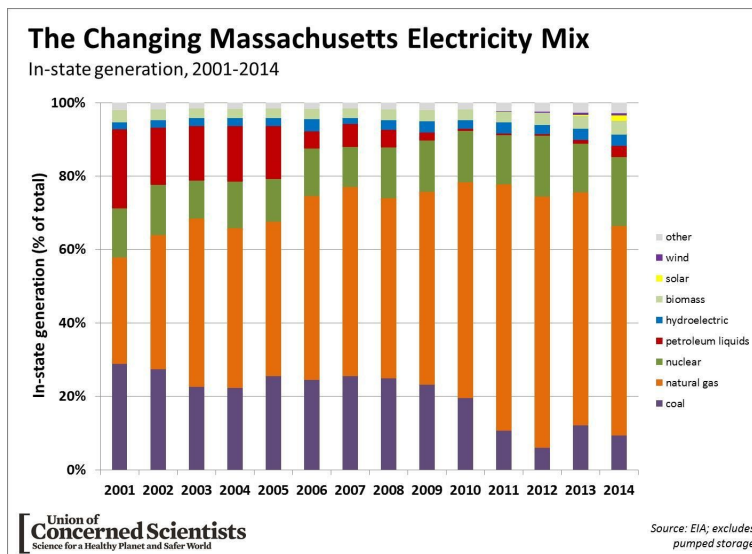
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

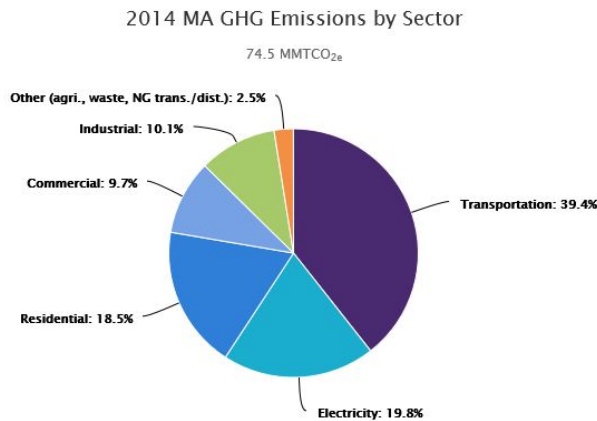
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Maria Robinson: I've spent my career working on these issues; I feel very passionately that unless we make drastic changes, we will see the catastrophic effects of climate changes. We need more incentives for adoption of electric vehicles in Massachusetts (see Rhode Island's Beneficial Electrification work in the public utilities division), and we need to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels (which could benefit from additional incentives for renewables + storage technologies, which would reduce our reliance on oil fuel in the winter). Instead we see the potential for the Trump Administration to allow for a new pipeline to be built to provide more natural gas for power generation and a reduction in funding for public transportation.

As a legislator, I would work closely with the department of public utilities and the regional grid operator (ISO-NE) to make sure that other legislators understand the roles those entities play as well as the decisions they face. ISO-NE is currently claiming to the federal government that we have a fuel security issue and that inefficient plants slated for retirement must stay online; as a legislator, I could work to change the laws to guide where our next MWh comes from.

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

Maria Robinson: I have worked on clean energy policy, including access to renewable energy, energy efficiency, efficient grid, and demand response technologies.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes. Framingham has adopted a plastic-bag ban that is effective.

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?*

Maria Robinson: Yes. I strongly support removing the net metering caps.

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?

Maria Robinson: Yes. We need at least a 3% increase in the RPS as we see new offshore wind generation being installed; we want to continue to encourage onshore wind and solar resources. We also need to ramp up our energy efficiency work to remain the #1 ranked state in this area.

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?

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

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

Maria Robinson: Yes.

RGGI is a great program, but we need to do more, especially economy-wide (specifically transportation).

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?

Maria Robinson: Yes. Yes, although often times this results in less efficient and less sustainable power generation. I think we should first be asking our cities and towns to be employing community choice aggregation to adopt 100% renewable energy generation.

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

Maria Robinson: 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?*

Maria Robinson: 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.

Maria Robinson: I care deeply about the state of DCF, where I believe there are incredible dedicated social workers and not enough funding or strong management to keep their caseloads from overflowing. We need to incentivize more people to go into social work, perhaps by providing a tuition reimbursement after a certain number of years of state service.