

Tram Nguyen

18th Essex

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 18th Essex

Party: Democratic

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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

Tram Nguyen

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

Tram Nguyen: I have been a legal aid attorney my entire legal career and in addition to providing direct legal representation, I have also engaged in legislative advocacy to push for bills that would benefit my clients. The current state representative has opposed every single bill that I've worked on and has refused to meet with me. I learned that the incumbent is anti-immigrant, anti-choice, anti-union, anti-school, anti-poor, and anti-LGBTQ. Additionally he scores dead last with environmental groups, yet he scores 93% with the NRA. I cannot stand more polar opposite of him on these issues, and I don't believe that he represents me and many others in the district. After participating in the Women's March, I was further encouraged to consider running for office, and I made the decision to run against this far right Republican incumbent.

Here are top priorities:

Healthy and safe families: I am committed to working toward making healthcare more affordable and accessible to all, supporting common sense gun laws to ensure the safety of all residents, protecting reproductive rights, and working to increase equality and inclusion in our communities.

Tackling the opioid crisis: I would work on legislation that focuses on prevention and treatment. As part of the effort to focus on prevention, I would also support legislation that would establish a Safe and Supportive Schools Trust Fund that supports school-based programs that: educate children and young persons on addiction, substance misuse and other risky behaviors; and identifies and supports children and young persons at risk. I would also work on legislation that addresses opioid prescribing practices through physician education, and new limits on the number of opioid medications that may be prescribed, as well as increase the availability to first responders and caregivers of Naloxone (Narcan), the overdose reversal agent.

Increase local aid: As a product of public schools, I know first-hand how crucial a well-funded school district is to the health and vitality of our communities, and I will work toward increasing funding for our public schools. I also want to invest sensibly in roads, bridges, and other infrastructure; find opportunities for working families, seniors, and future generations to join and stay in our communities; and develop strategies to preserve the ecological infrastructure and the beauty of our woodlands and waterways.

Workers' rights: We all deserve the opportunity to earn a living wage from our work; we deserve to have adequate job protections; we deserve safe work environments free from harassment and other unfair treatment; and we all deserve to know that we are being honestly compensated for our labor and that employers aren't stealing our wages and exploiting our trust.

Environmental protection: I would support increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) by 3% or more; increasing offshore wind development in Massachusetts; increasing investment and development

of public transportation; and increasing funding for environmental agencies to 1% of the state operating budget.

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

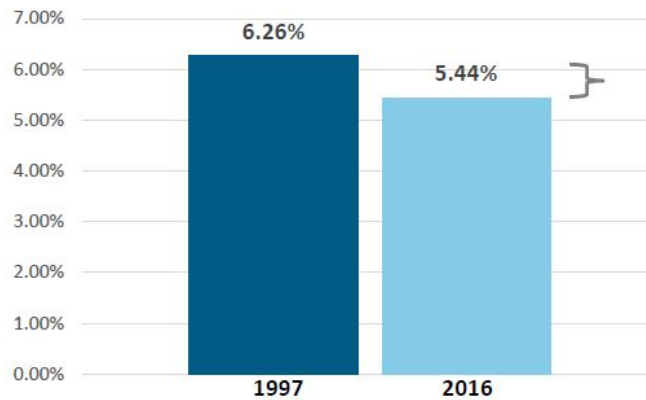
Tram Nguyen: I am running for state representative to be a tireless advocate for EVERYONE in the district. As a legal aid attorney, I have represented workers, domestic violence survivors, seniors, and veterans in the courtroom. As state representative, I will advocate for the people of the district and ensure that all voices are heard on issues like reproductive rights, common sense gun reforms and the opioid epidemic. As someone who has committed my career to public service, I know how important it is to be available and accessible to the people and actually work with them to find real solutions.

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.

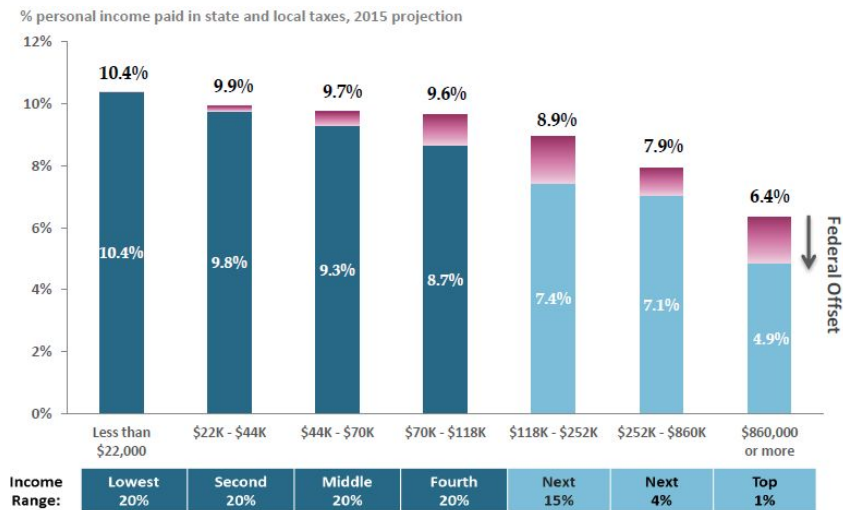
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: We need to stop giving tax breaks to corporations or the wealthy in a way that cripple our ability to invest in areas that expand economic growth and limit our ability to invest in things that we need in our communities, like schools, roads, bridges, and public transportation. I support increasing accountability for tax breaks, credits, and exemptions for corporations. These mechanisms are designed to create jobs, but if the corporations are not creating jobs and not living up to commitments made to get the tax breaks, then the state should be able to "clawback" lost tax revenue. Furthermore, I believe that corporations that receive tax breaks should be required to pay living wage and provide good benefits to all employees. I also support raising the tax rate for investment income, which is primarily earned by the wealthiest taxpayers, and allow for exemption for low- and middle income seniors. Furthermore, I believe in increasing Earned Income Tax Credit to support working families.

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.).*

Tram Nguyen: I was a part of the Healthy Families Coalition, which worked on the EITC bill to increase EITC for working families and also extend EITC to abandoned spouses and survivors of domestic violence. MA was the first state in the country to pass the latter provision to allow for abandoned spouses and survivors of domestic violence to claim EITC within the first year of separation, when these workers need it most.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I supported RUM in this initiative. It is unfortunate that the SJC ruled that this question was unconstitutional.

4. *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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

5. *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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

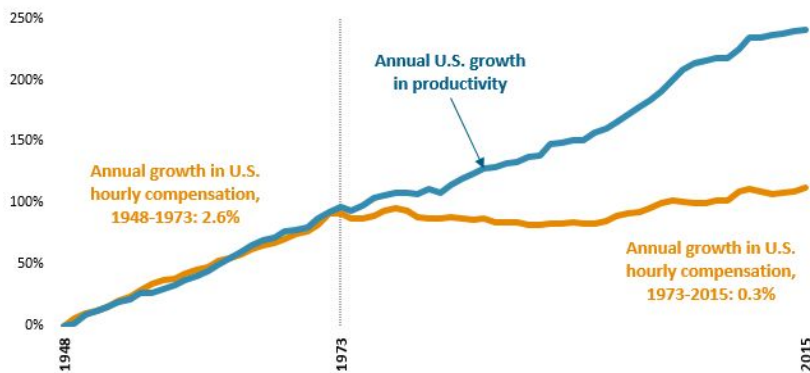
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

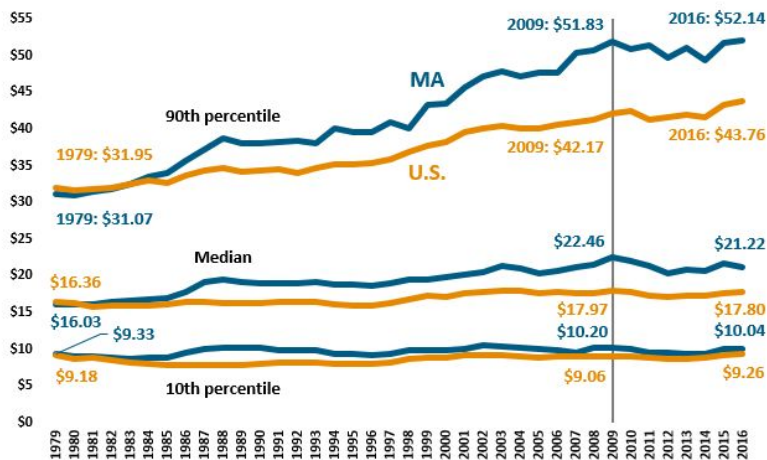
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Tram Nguyen: We need to work on legislation to ensure that EVERYONE has the economic resources needed to be healthy, support their families, and live with dignity. We need to help lift people into the middle class and help them stay there. As I mentioned, I support increasing EITC for working families. I have personally worked on this legislation and am thrilled that the abandoned spouses and survivors of domestic violence provision passed last year and will continue to work with the coalition to push the other provisions through. I support the creation of an "Opportunity Fund" to make early education and public higher education affordable to all, paid for by a tax on wealthy private university endowments. I think that people should be able to afford college and come out with less debt or debt free. College and higher education aren't for everyone, so I also support investment in trade schools. I've talked to many unions and many of them have great programs to train people for good-paying jobs and we need to support that effort. I support Fight for \$15 and Paid Family Medical Leave to allow for economic security for working families, and I collected signatures for both initiatives. I am very happy to see that both measures were passed recently. I think that the wealthiest segments of society need to pay their fair share. It's disheartening to see that people in the lowest income brackets are paying such a higher percentage of their income on basic necessities, such as housing, healthcare, food, etc. We need to close gender and race wage gaps and remove barriers to employment. We need to hold employers accountable and end discrimination in all forms in the workplace, which would increase economic security for all people, particularly women and people of color.

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

3. Fair Wages. *Do you support eliminating the subminimum wage for tipped workers in support of one fair wage?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

4. Paid Vacation Time. *The US is the only advanced economy that does not guarantee workers paid vacation time. Would you support legislation to require that employers provide at least 10 days of paid vacation time per year?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

5. Unions -- Part I. *If workers in Massachusetts make the decision to unionize, would you be willing to publicly support a union-organizing drive and discourage management from fighting their decision?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I am a part of UAW local 2320 and I absolutely support the right to organize.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

7. **Unions -- Part III.** *In the 2018 Janus ruling, the US Supreme Court banned unions from collecting "fair share fees," i.e., fees that workers whose workplaces are they choose not to join the union. Would you support legislation authorizing unions to charge non-members for the specific costs incurred for representing a non-member in a grievance or arbitration case?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. The Janus decision was a terrible blow to unions, and I would do all that I can to oppose any roll back of the collective bargaining rights of state or municipal employees. I would absolutely support legislation to authorize unions to charge non-members costs incurred for representing a non-member, since I don't believe that anyone should have a free ride. If someone chooses to not pay fees to be part of the union, then they should not expect the unions to represent them for free.

8. **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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. My colleagues and I worked on and have supported this legislation from the very beginning. As a legal aid attorney, I have worked on many wage theft cases.

9. **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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. A contract is only valid if both sides have equal bargaining power. Unfortunately, in this economy, employers and employees don't have equal bargaining power and employees often feel as though they have no choice but to sign employment contracts with mandatory arbitration provisions, which are a great disadvantage to employees.

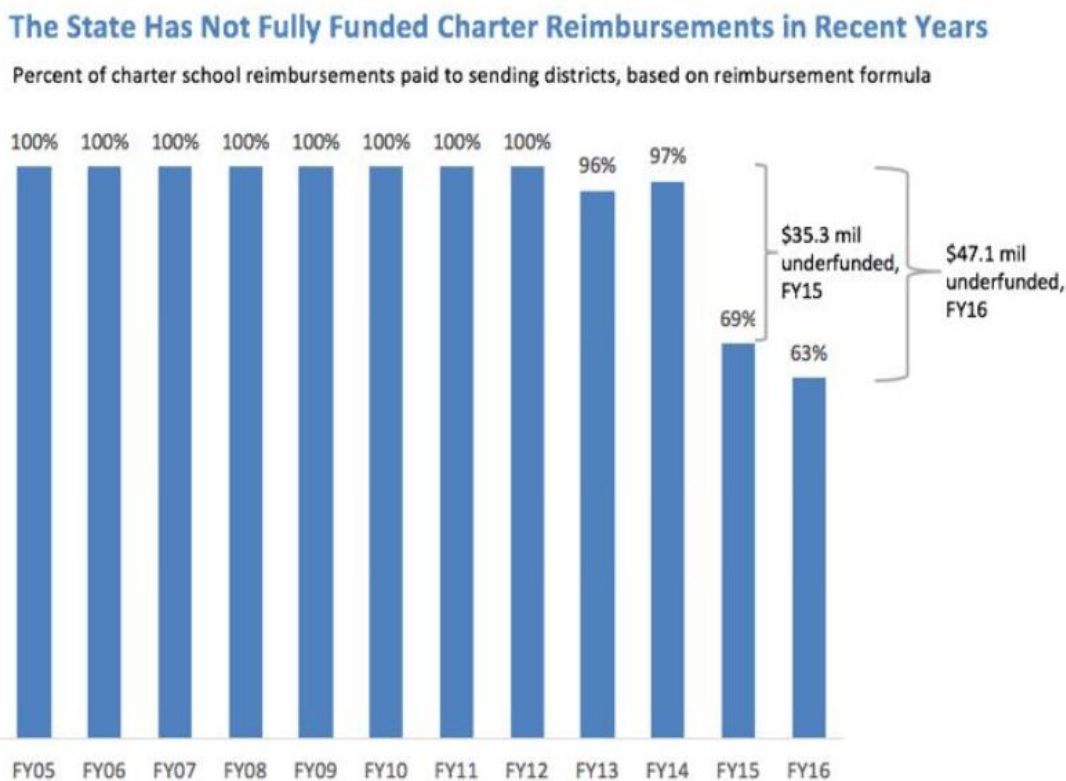
10. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

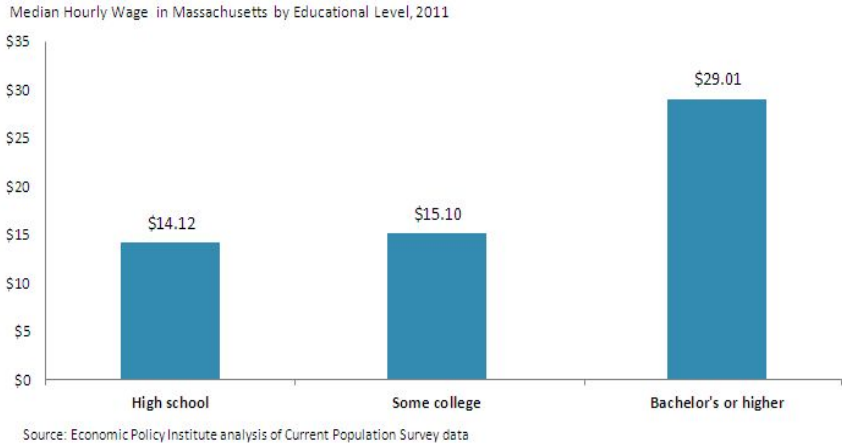
C. EDUCATION

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.

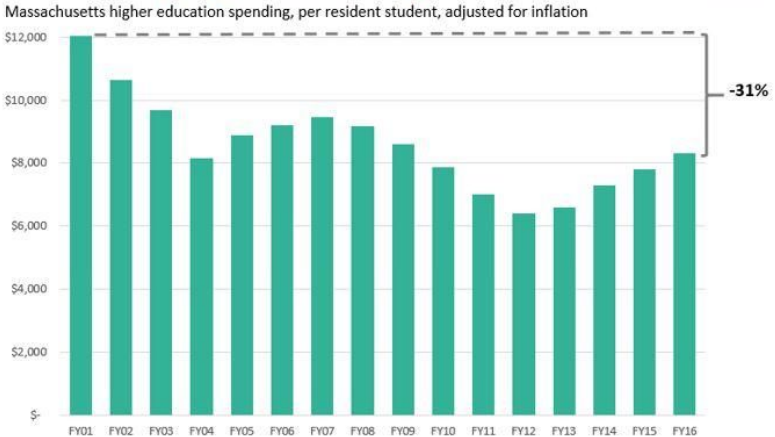


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Tram Nguyen: As a product of public schools, I know first-hand how crucial a well-funded school district is to the health and vitality of our communities, and I will work toward increasing funding for our public schools. I believe that education and the economy are completely intertwined. Quality child care and early education are necessary investments in children's future and allow them opportunity to gain economic stability. We should invest in high quality early education and care available to working families and allow vouchers for low income families to put toward child care so that the families can make a living to move into the middle class. We should establish universal pre-k and mandate full-day kindergarten in all public schools to support working families. We also need to invest in higher wages for early educators to decrease turnovers and increase the number of quality educators entering this field. We should support public school teachers overall by preserving their collective bargaining rights and restoring just cause termination rights for all teachers. I believe that we are not sufficiently funding public education and that we should implement the recommendations by the Foundation Budget Review Commission to expand and improve educational opportunity for all MA children. We should also expand efforts to better support English learners and increase local reimbursements for special education. We also should work on lowering class sizes. I absolutely support bilingual education as I personally worked on and supported that bill. We should support teachers and students by eliminating the use of student test data in educator evaluations. I also don't believe in privatizing our public school system by increasing use of charter schools, third-party management organizations, and school vouchers. I particularly oppose for-profit corporations from running charter schools and federal or private funding that would create a school voucher school voucher program, since that will leave many students behind.

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

Tram Nguyen: I have worked on and supported bills like the bilingual education bill as well as the interpreters bill to make sure that there are certified interpreters in schools to help students and parents with limited English proficiency.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

4. *Standardized Testing. Do you support a three-year moratorium on the high-stakes uses of standardized testing, as proposed by S.308? (High-stakes" uses include high school graduation, teacher evaluation, and assigning ratings to schools.)*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

5. *Equitable Funding. Do you support changing the Chapter 70 Education formula, including the Foundation Budget, to incorporate proper state funding for ELL students, Special Education students,*

transportation costs, charter school reimbursements to sending schools, and class size reduction?

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

6. **Charter Schools.** *Last November, Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly rejected a ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools given the millions of dollars it would have siphoned away from public schools.*

a. *Would you support keeping the cap on charter schools?*

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

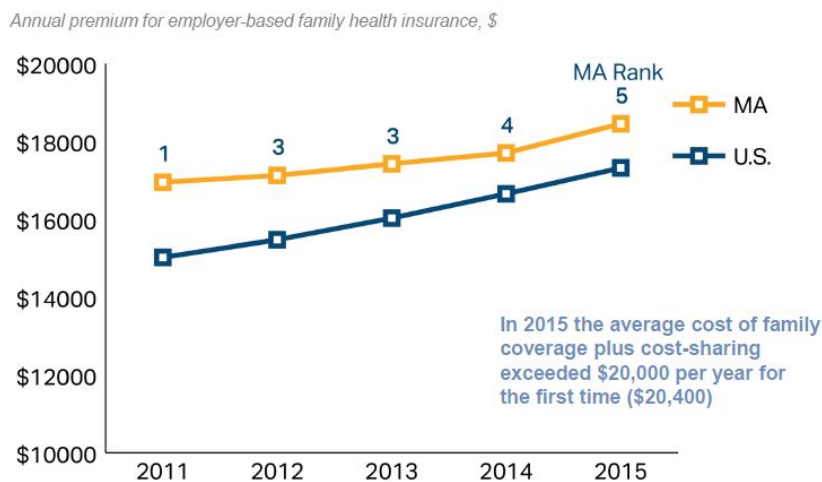
9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** *Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

D. HEALTH CARE

Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with 97% of the state having health insurance. We provided the blueprint for the national Affordable Care Act, with an insurance-based reform passed by the Democratic Legislature and signed by Republican Governor Romney. While the reforms of President Obama's Affordable Care Act are under assault by Republicans (who control the Executive and both legislative chambers), Massachusetts could lead in more progressive health care reforms. Even without the Republican dismantling of national reforms, there is still work to do right here in Massachusetts. MA's Democratic Legislature passed, and the Republican governor signed, the ACCESS bill in 2017--protecting the right to no-fee contraception, which is (federally) under threat: Where our federal advances are being rolled back, Massachusetts could--and should--push progressively forward. Significant disparities in health insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and medical debt remains a persistent problem. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.

MA has among the highest health insurance premiums in the country.



Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Medical Expenditure Panel Survey, Insurance Component

1. *Please share your personal values and principles regarding health care insurance, delivery, and outcomes.*

Tram Nguyen: I am especially concerned about the affordability and accessibility of health care, especially with the ACA at risk. If there are federal cuts to MA Medicaid funding, I would support a "pay or play" payroll tax on companies that don't provide health coverage to their employees. I support creation of single payer health insurance system that guarantees access and lowers the cost of health care overall. I would also support individuals and small businesses to choose a public option through the health exchange. Furthermore, I would support restoration of full dental benefits for MassHealth recipients. We should also support those in the health care industry, especially social workers working

in programmatic areas of high need. I support a student loan repayment pilot program for social workers that would encourage more people to enter this field.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

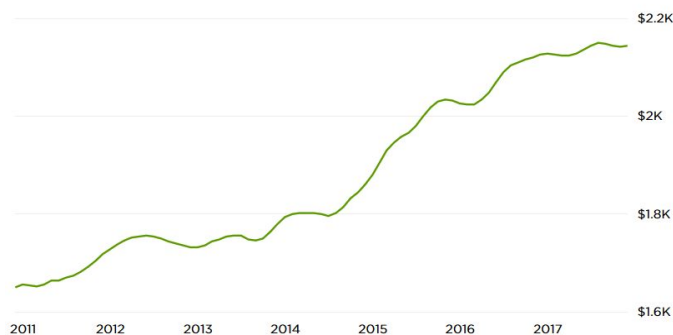
6. **Prescription Drug Pricing.** *Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

E. HOUSING

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

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



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

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

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

Tram Nguyen: We need to tackle homelessness by supporting affordable housing. I support restoring funding to repair existing public housing, create new units of affordable housing and fund the Mass. Rental Voucher Program. I also support increasing funding for service providers and caseworker to provide support to those seeking housing the state. I also support funding for shelters and transitional housing facilities for homeless veterans, survivors of domestic violence, and those suffering from opioid addiction. Moreover, I support measures to overturn the 1994 Rent Control Prohibition. As someone who lived in Boston for many years, I have witnessed first-hand the housing affordability crisis. People should be able to live, work and raise a family where they choose, and with the high increase in rent in certain areas, particularly Boston, it's becoming impossible for people to stay in neighborhoods of their choosing and to live in places near jobs and transportation.

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

housing (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).

Tram Nguyen: In my work as a legal aid attorney, I have helped many clients who live in public housing, and I know that they would be homeless without public housing and affordable housing options, so I very much support increasing funding. I was thrilled to see that the Affordable Housing Bond bill passed this past year and it was really frustrating to see that my opponent was the only legislator to oppose that bill.

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

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

b. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

I am particularly interested in the Community Preservation Act and I think that CPA has done so much good for the communities in my 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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

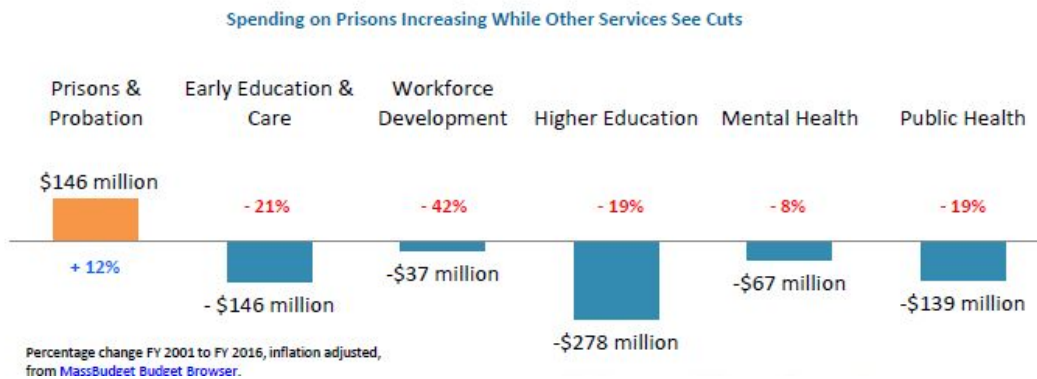
8. **Combating Speculation.** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

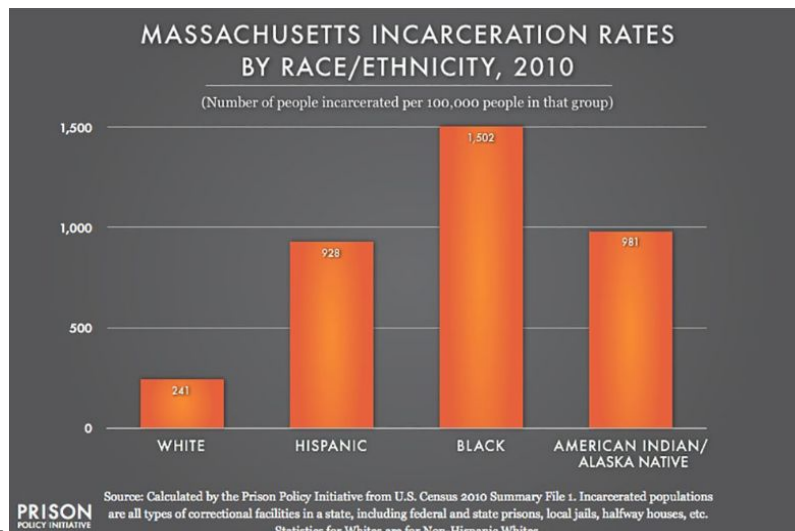
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

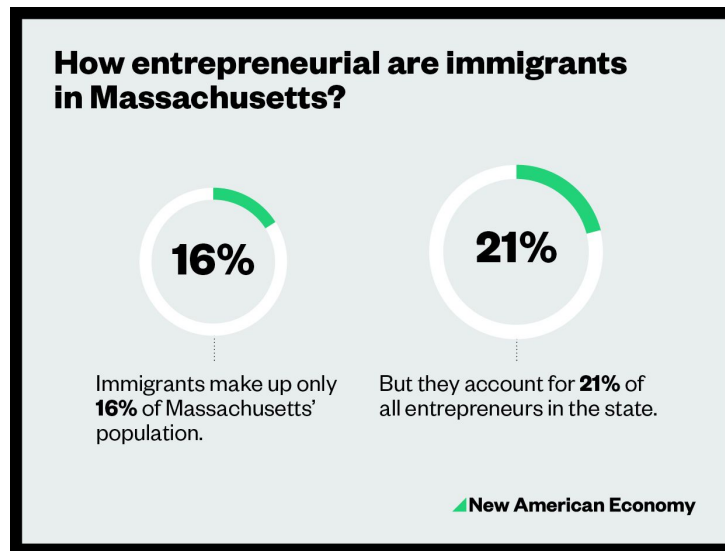
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Tram Nguyen: My family arrived in Massachusetts as political refugees from Vietnam with \$100 to our name when I was five years old. A product of the Merrimack Valley public school system, I became the first person in my family to attend college, at Tufts University, and then law school, at Northeastern University. After law school, I sought opportunities to give back to my community and work to ensure that all other people had the rights, freedoms, and opportunities that they deserved. I started to work at Greater Boston Legal Services, where I provided some of the most vulnerable people in the state – victims of domestic violence, immigrants, low-wage workers, senior citizens, and people with disabilities – with free legal representation. My personal story, and the work I do every day, taught me the importance of protecting freedom and dignity for every member of our society.

I care deeply about inclusion and equality. Massachusetts can and must continue to lead on LGBTQ rights. We must ensure that the transgender anti-discrimination law is upheld, that LGBTQ children feel safe in schools and do not face bullying and harassment because of their sexual orientation, and that any attempts to repeal or remove protections that the LGBTQ community has here are vehemently opposed. As a legislator, I will work to ensure that if federal laws remove LGBTQ protections, the Legislature will fight for state-level protections.

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

Tram Nguyen: As an attorney, I swore to defend Constitutional protections for everyone. I have always supported every measure to combat racism and other injustices, and have fought for the vulnerable to uphold equality. As a woman, a person of color, and an immigrant, I understand the importance of combating the negative impacts on disadvantaged identities and communities. In my role as a legal aid attorney, I've helped new immigrants, people with disability, survivors of domestic violence, and people from the LGBTQ community, and I have advocated for them to defend their rights in court.

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?

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I absolutely support equality and inclusion for all. Unfortunately, my opponent is one of the leaders behind the ballot initiative to repeal the Anti-Discrimination Law.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I am absolutely in support of banning the barbaric practice of conversion therapy and my opponent voted against the ban.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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?*

Tram Nguyen: 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)?*

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

10. **Militarization of Police.** Under the federal 1033 program, the US Department of Defense can transfer excess military equipment to local police departments. Such equipment makes police forces look like occupying armies and exacerbates the impact of overpolicing in communities of color. Meanwhile, communities are often left in the dark about the equipment that local police departments are acquiring. Would you support, at minimum, a requirement that local elected officials vote on any such transfer before it can take place?

Tram Nguyen: 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?

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

12. **Safe Driving Act.** Would you support the Safe Driving Act, which would remove immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit?

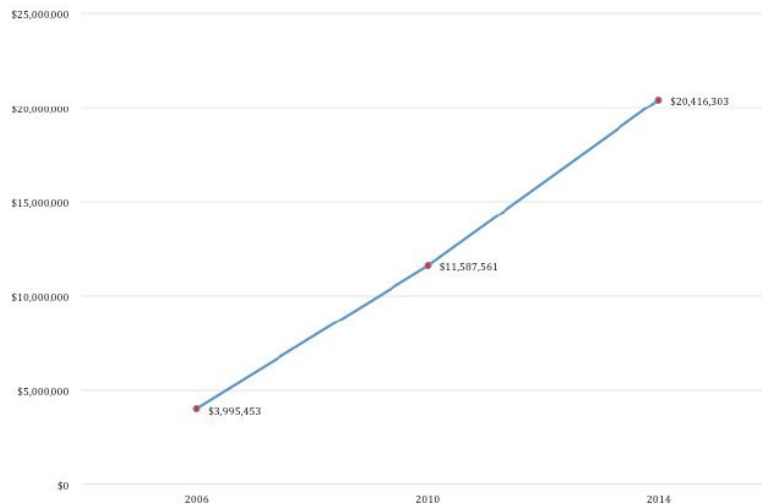
Tram Nguyen: Yes.

G. GOOD GOVERNMENT/ STRONG DEMOCRACY

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

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

Figure 1: MA Independent Expenditure Totals



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

Tram Nguyen: I am very much committed to increasing transparency and accountability in government. Voters deserve to know the supporters of their representatives. I oppose all forms of dark money. Unfortunately, my opponent is backed by the Mass Fiscal Alliance, who is being sued for not revealing their donors. I also think that legislators should be accountable to their voters by having their voting record, especially roll calls, more readily available.

I also want to increase voter registration, because I believe that voter participation is the key to a strong democracy. I support automatic voter registration, and I was so glad to see that it passed this past year. I vehemently oppose legislation that mandates government-issue IDs to vote, because I understand how difficult it is for some segments of our community to get access to such IDs. We need to remove barriers

to voting, not increase barriers. It is unacceptable that MA is the only state in New England without some form of Election Day registration, and I would work on legislation to allow voters to register the day of the election.

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

Tram Nguyen: I have been a long-time supporter of AVR. I also worked on the bilingual ballot initiative in 2014, signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick, which permanently mandated that Chinese and Vietnamese ballots be available for all elections in Boston.

3. *Power and the Legislature. Concentration of power in Leadership remains a problem in the MA Legislature and has been a persistent obstacle to progress, and that power is maintained by “process” rules on how decisions are made and which legislation moves forward. Would you support the following rules changes to dilute the amount of power held by leadership in your respective branch of government...?*

- a. *Allowing committees to appoint their own chair, instead of Leadership?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- b. *Allowing bills to be discharged from a committee if they have majority support in a given chamber?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- c. *Limiting extension orders to one per bill per committee for a maximum of 1 week in order to prevent needless delay?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

4. *Transparency. Too often, decisions that affect millions across the Commonwealth are made behind closed doors with little public input. Indeed, 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. Would you support the following efforts to increase transparency and public accountability...?*

- a. *Eliminating the aforementioned exemption?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- b. *Making all committee roll call votes available to the public?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- c. *Making conference committees more transparent by requiring minutes to be recorded and shared with the public within 24 hours of every meeting?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: 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"?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I absolutely support this as it would allow more women and candidates of color to run for office.

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

- a. *Election day voter registration*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- c. *No-fault absentee voting*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

- d. *Universal voting-by-mail*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

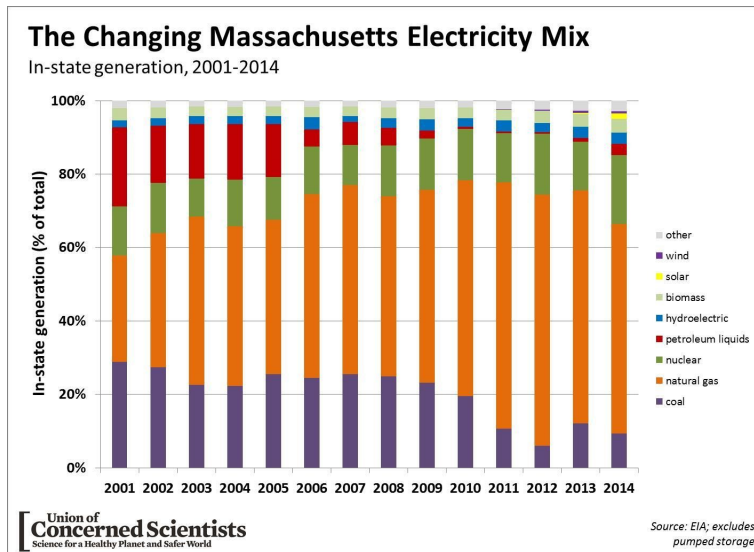
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

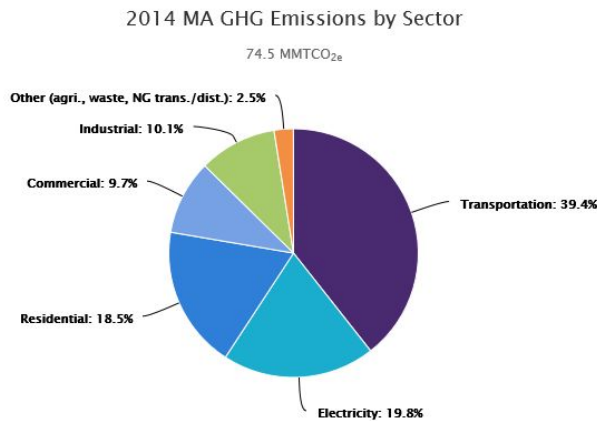
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Tram Nguyen: There are many environmental challenges facing the Commonwealth. At the state level, one big obstacle preventing us from adequately addressing environmental issues is the lack of funding. Only 0.5% of the state operating budget supports environmental agencies, and I support increasing this funding to 1% of the operating budget. I support accelerating an increase in the RPS to move more quickly to clean and renewable sources of energy. I also support preserving and improving the state's leading energy efficiency programs. At the community level, sewage overflow is certainly a problem, and I want to work with lawmakers to address this issue as well as work on other legislation that would preserve clean water. Recently, during a power outage, pipes that deliver sewage to a treatment plant serving the lower Merrimack Valley spilled millions of gallons of untreated waste into the Merrimack River, which runs right through the 18th Essex District. Hundreds of thousands of people depend on Merrimack River for their water source, including residents of Tewksbury and Andover, two towns within the district. I support Senator Jehlen's bill that requires sewage plant operators to notify the public within 24 hours of an overflow occurrence, mandates that all CSO events be collected and maintained (including time, place, and estimated discharge volume), and requires signage that warns people of the potential threat to public health that raw sewage discharges pose.

I also care about environmental justice. One pressing environmental justice issue is that low-income communities of color are at a great disadvantage when it comes to preparing for, and responding to, climate change. People from these communities haven't had the same access to stable housing, quality education, and other resources that would allow them to bounce back from a crisis, such as extreme weather events. Especially in these past years with the terrible storms and power outages, the disparate impact on these communities has become much more apparent. In these situations, people from more affluent communities could go stay with relatives or pay for alternative housing, but for people from low-income communities, they don't have many options. If people don't have stable lives already, their lives are going to be even more disrupted, which would make it that much harder for them to move up socioeconomically.

Also, the lack of housing options greatly hinders advancement of environmental justice. People from low-income communities and communities of color often have no choice but to live near landfills, waste incinerator facilities, etc., since they can't afford to live elsewhere.

Lack of employment options is another issue related to environmental justice. Immigrant workers and workers from communities of color are often forced to work in positions where they are exposed to more toxic chemicals. As an employment law attorney, I have helped many low-wage workers who work in nail salons, where they are exposed to toxins every day. Many of my clients have asthma and other illnesses that are likely related to their occupation. Some of the clients expressed that they must stay in the profession, because they lack the education and ability to speak English to move to any other profession."

2. ***Please indicate work you personally have done to protect the environment and expand access to public transportation.***
3. ***Waste Reduction.*** *Would you support a statewide ban on single-use shopping bags and a requirement that alternatives be more sustainable?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

4. ***Solar energy.*** *Do you support increasing equitable access to solar power by removing caps on solar generation and restoring compensation for low-income and community solar?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

5. ***Renewable Energy.*** *Do you support a target of at least 50% clean energy by 2030 for Massachusetts, as adopted in California and New York? (Hawaii is committed to 100% renewables by 2045). To accomplish this, would you support an increase in the Renewable Energy Production Standard (the green energy mandate on utilities) by at least 3% each year?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

6. ***Environmental Justice.*** *Successive and bipartisan gubernatorial administrations have made verbal commitments to environmental justice (EJ) and Governor Deval Patrick issued an Executive Order on Environmental Justice in 2014 which has not been implemented.*

a. Would you support implementation of the 2014 EO?

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes. I completely oppose energy companies building infrastructure and charging clients for the costs all the while transferring more wealth to corporate interests. However, I don't oppose all construction of interstate gas pipelines if a particular community has a need for pipelines. I want us to reach 100% clean energy, but until we get there, many residents have to rely on fossil fuel, and I want to make sure that all communities have access to energy if they need it.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

9. **Public Utilities.** *Would you support legislation to allow municipalities to purchase their electric distribution utility (the poles and wires that transmit power) and operate a municipal or cooperative electric utility?*

Tram Nguyen: Yes.

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

Tram Nguyen: 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?*

Tram Nguyen: 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.

Tram Nguyen: I care about common sense gun safety reforms to make sure that MA stays a leader in this area. I think it is important to keep our communities, particularly our children, safe by keeping guns away from those who are a danger to themselves and others. My opponent, on the other hand, is 97% with the NRA and 100% with GOAL.