

Virak Uy

14th Suffolk

State Representative

Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Representative

Legislative District: 14th Suffolk

Party: Democratic

Website: virakuy.com

Twitter: n/a

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/The-Committee-to-Elect-Virak-Uy-927143100799071/>



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

Virak Uy

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

Virak Uy: I am running because I believe that the future and success of our communities will be defined by the opportunities we provide to all residents regardless of their race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation.

My top 3 priorities are:

1. education
2. economic development
3. health care

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

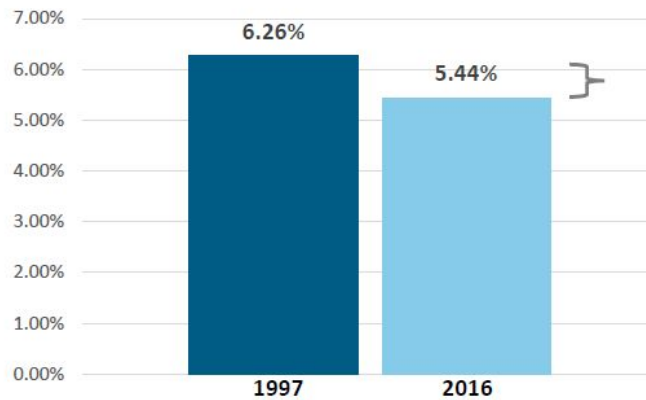
Virak Uy: I have extensive experience in education. I have been teaching in the Boston public schools for eight years. I am also a product of BPS. As a result, education is extremely an important issue for me in this campaign. I would like to be able to advocate for adequate funding for our schools, teachers and students.

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.

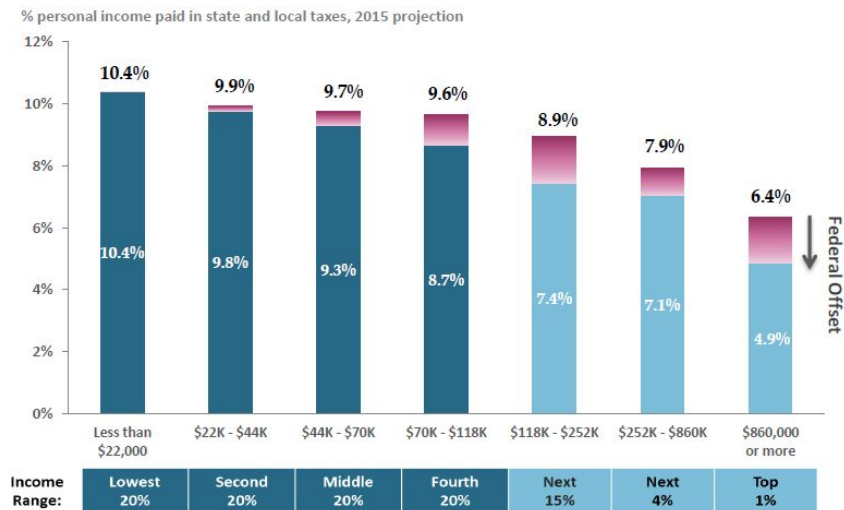
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Virak Uy: The current status of "nonprofits" i.e. hospitals and universities who make PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) payments to cities and towns only on a voluntary basis should be made mandatory not voluntary.

I believe in a fair share taxation system. Boston is the mecca of many medical and educational institutions, nearly all of which are nonprofits. Currently, these academic medical centers (AMCs) paid only one-quarter of their fair share of the cost of essential municipal services-and this share represents only a fraction of what residential and commercial taxpayers must pay. Further, the area labor market for hospitals and the health care sector in general is significantly inequitable, with almost two-thirds of the sector's occupations failing to pay wages high enough to provide for workers' basic self-sufficiency. The city of Boston lost millions in revenue from land and properties tax exemption owned by hospitals and universities. As a result, it puts additional pressure on residential taxpayers to pay increased taxes, at the same time restricting the City's ability to provide for our public schools and other social services.

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?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

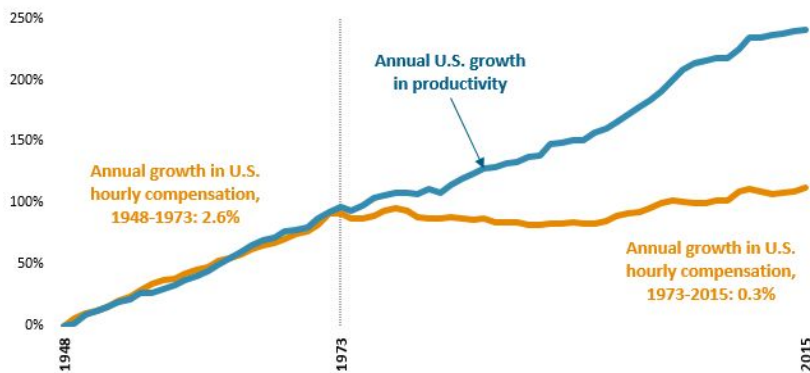
B. JOB GROWTH AND THE ECONOMY

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

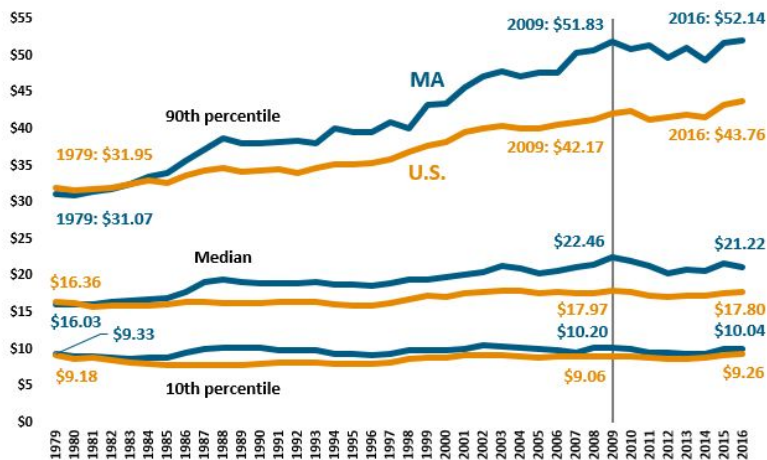
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Virak Uy: I think we can improve the economy and economic security for all people by keeping the housing and health care costs down. In addition to providing grants and financial aid to for those who can't afford to go to college, we should also be creating more technical or vocational schools so that our youth can receive apprenticeship and good paying jobs in the technical fields. (i.e..electrician, plumber etc..).

The wealth and income inequality ratio/gap between top CEOs and its employees is extremely wide. compensation for CEO's skyrocketing while wages for their workers stagnated. The rich get receives significant tax breaks. We should make the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share of taxation and allow their employees benefit from profit sharing of companies successful.

We should revive and continue the movement of Dr. Martin Luther King's original Poor People's Campaign. "People should not live in or die from poverty in the richest nation ever exist." We need to restore and continue to raise awareness of the poverty issue in our communities.

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. **Increasing Wages.**

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

5. **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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

6. **Youth Jobs.** *Do you support greater reinvestment in youth employment and vocational training programs?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

- 7. **Privatizing Public Services.** In 2015, the MA Legislature, urged by Governor Baker, voted to waive the so-called Pacheco Law for the MBTA. The Pacheco Law contains strong safeguards to ensure that state services are not privatized when doing so would harm workers and state revenue. Do you support reinstating the Pacheco Law?*

Virak Uy: No.

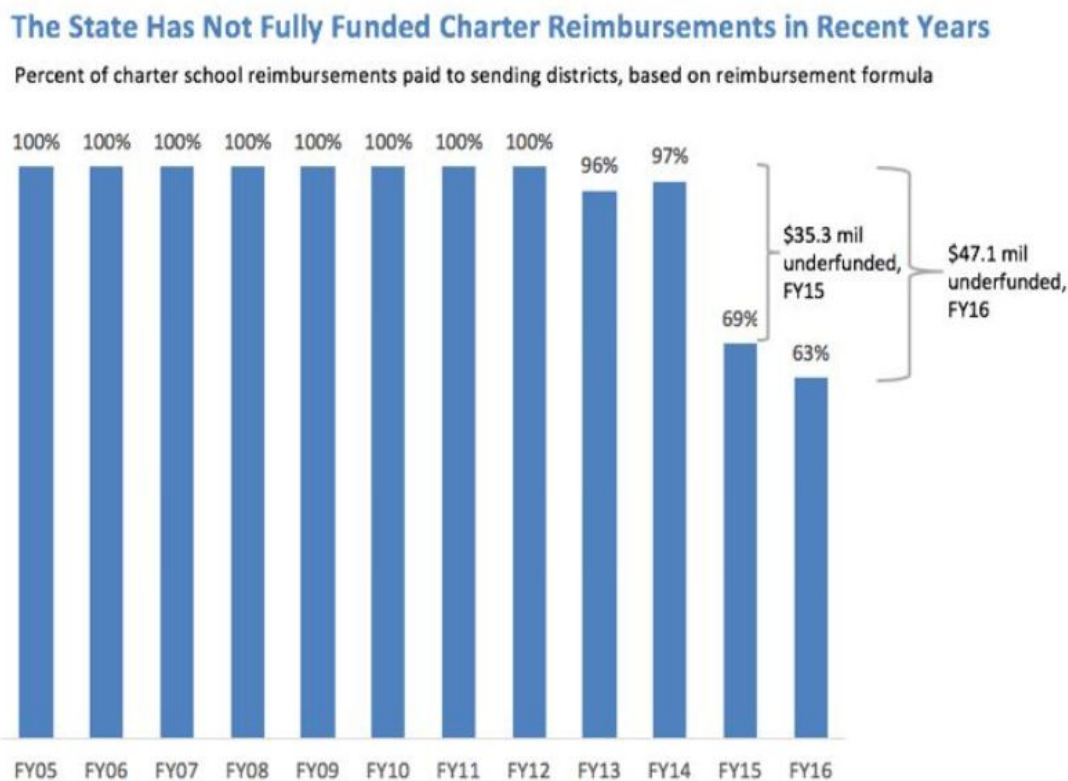
- 8. **Economic Democracy.** Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

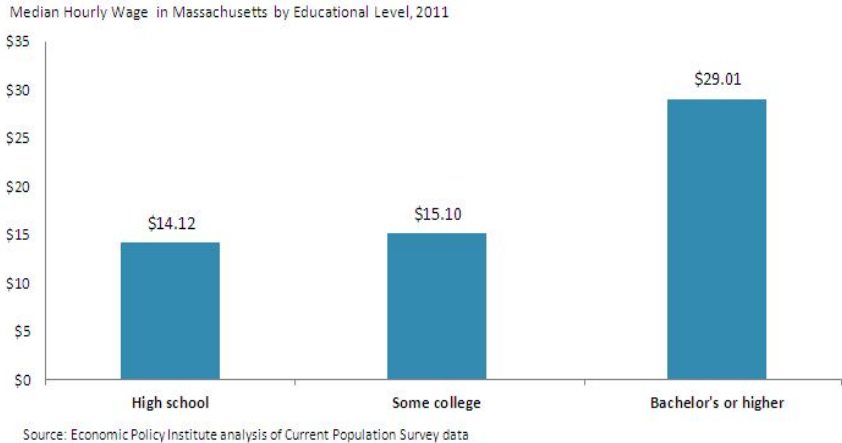
C. EDUCATION

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.

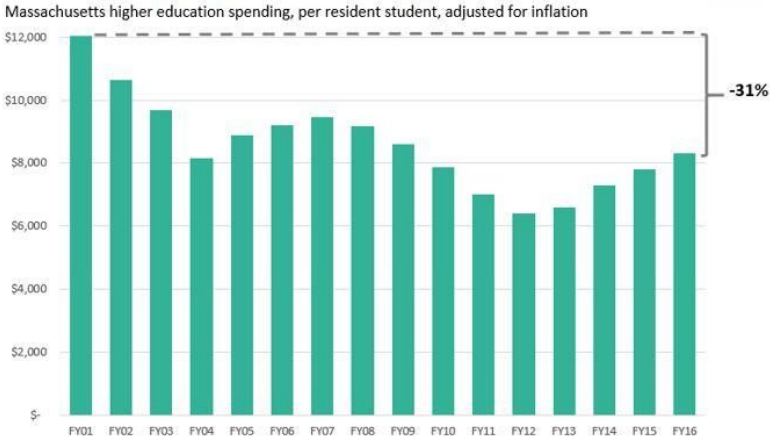


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?

Virak Uy: I want to advocate for adequate funding to hire sufficient school counselors and learning specialists in order to support our ELL and other students who need academic intervention as well as students who has social and emotional needs on their IEPs. I believe that we will be able to support our teachers and help our students reach their academic goals and close the achievement gaps, if we can provide adequate resources and support in these those areas.

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?

Virak Uy: 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?

Virak Uy: 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?

Virak Uy: 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?***

Virak Uy: 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?

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

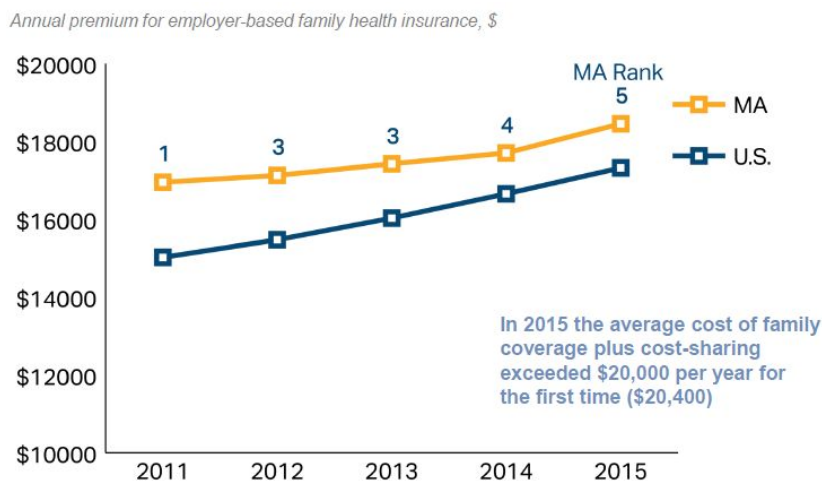
8. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** *Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Virak Uy: 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.*

Virak Uy: I think we need to do more research and look at data at a disaggregate level for different communities so that we can understand where the gaps are and then expand access and close enduring disparities. Every communities are different in terms of their needs from health service provider and outcomes.

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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

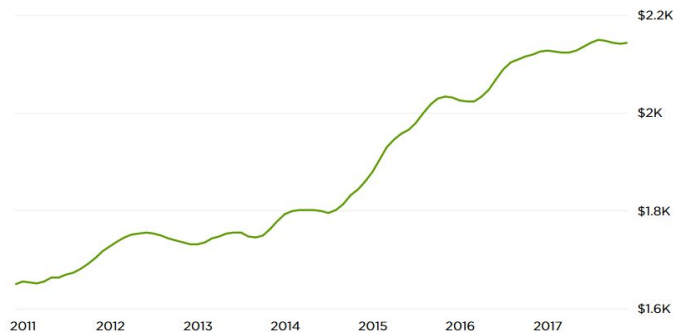
- 6. *Prescription Drug Pricing.*** *Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

Virak Uy: 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?

Virak Uy: Access to affordable housing is a civil right. It is incredibly important to me that the people who help build and sustain communities -- the lifeblood of any city -- be given every opportunity to remain in their homes, particularly our senior and immigrant populations who continue to be taken advantage of. I believe that you should be able to live in the same city or town in which you work if you want to. I believe that we must work together to find ways to develop our neighborhoods without displacing people. We have to tackle these issues using multiple approaches. It is not enough to build more housing stock or place families in existing housing, though more stock is needed. Whether it is homelessness, poverty, or the threat of eviction, we must look to provide good-paying jobs, affordable housing, debt-free education, healthy food options, and adequate public transportation to ensure that each family, veteran, or senior is able to stay in their home and lead a more productive life.

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 affordable housing production (especially low-income housing units) and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

- 6. 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

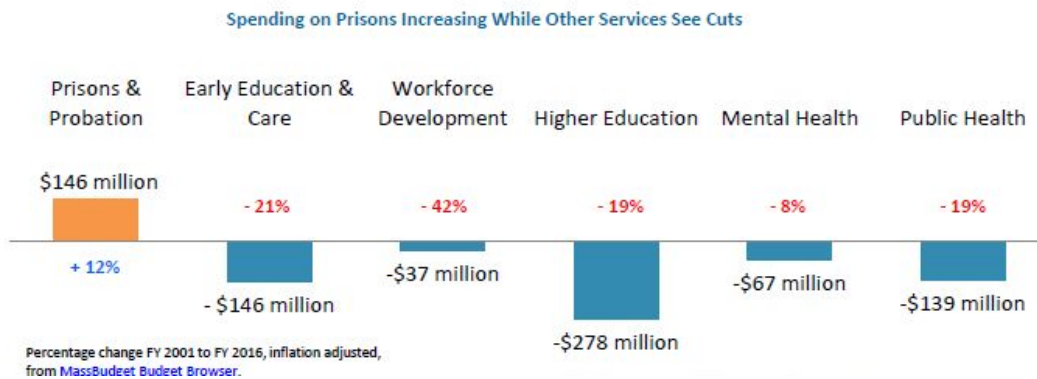
- 7. Combating Speculation.** *Do you support imposing a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

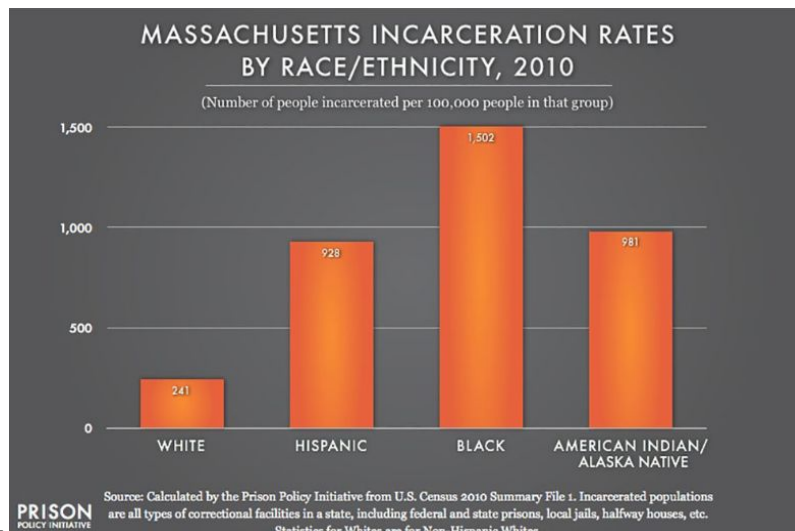
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

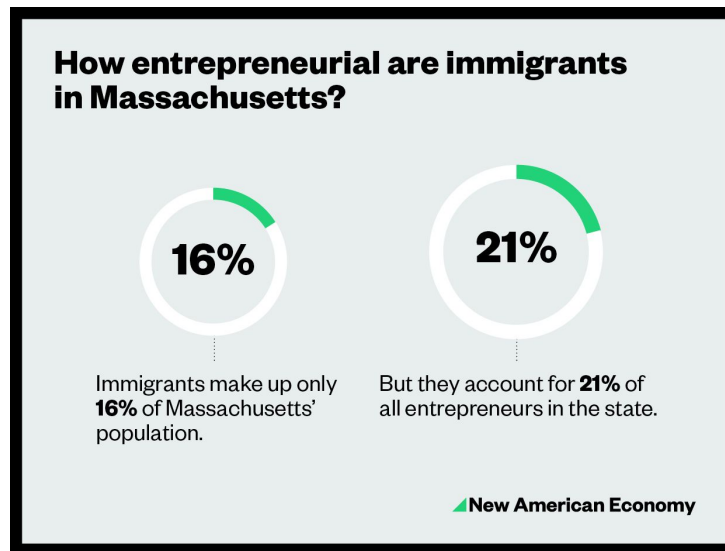
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Virak Uy: I believe that we all should strive to build a sustainable and thriving communities that is racial and cultural diverse and inclusive. In order to address racial and social justice issues, I think Massachusetts should disaggregate data by racial ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation so that we can have a better understanding of the needs of each communities around education, poverty and health issues.

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

Virak Uy: I am the board president of the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) in Lowell, MA. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for Cambodian Americans and other minorities and economically disadvantaged persons in Lowell through educational, cultural, economic and social programs.

I was a board member of Massachusetts Asian + Pacific Islanders (MAP) for Health. MAP's mission is to engage young people in improving the health and well-being of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities in Massachusetts. Massachusetts Asian + Pacific Islanders (MAP) for Health was founded in 1993 as the Massachusetts Asian AIDS Prevention Project by members of the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community who were concerned with the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV/AIDS prevention and health services in the Boston area. In 2000, as part of a collaborative, strategic planning process between the organization and community stakeholders, we expanded our mission to embrace other important health issues that disproportionately affect APIs but remain unaddressed due to cultural stigmas prevalent in our communities.

I was also a board member of the Northeast Chapter of the American Red Cross.

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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

4. **LGBTQ Youth.** *Our neighboring states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont ban the use of harmful conversion therapy practices for minors. Do you support banning the use of conversion therapy in Massachusetts?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

5. **Mandatory Minimums.** *The landmark criminal justice reform bill passed earlier this year eliminated or reduced a number of mandatory minimums for drug-related offenses; however, it left in place, or expanded, those related to opioids. The opioid crisis in Massachusetts is severe, but it will not be solved by doubling down on criminalization. Do you support eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid drug offenses?*

Virak Uy: 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 19?*

Virak Uy: 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)?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

8. **Reducing Recidivism.** *Do you support increasing investment in education and job training programs for the formerly incarcerated?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

9. **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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

11. **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?

Virak Uy:

12. **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?

Virak Uy: Yes.

13. **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?

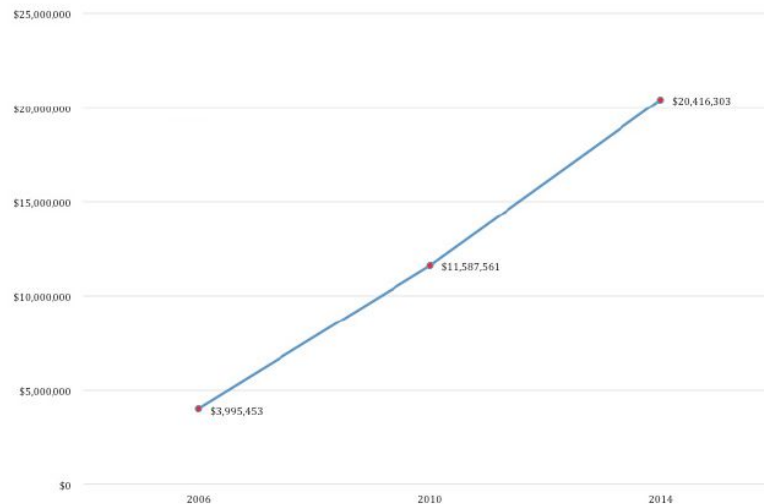
Virak Uy: Yes.

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.*

Virak Uy:

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

a. *Election day voter registration*

Virak Uy: Yes.

b. *Automatic voter registration*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Virak Uy: Yes.

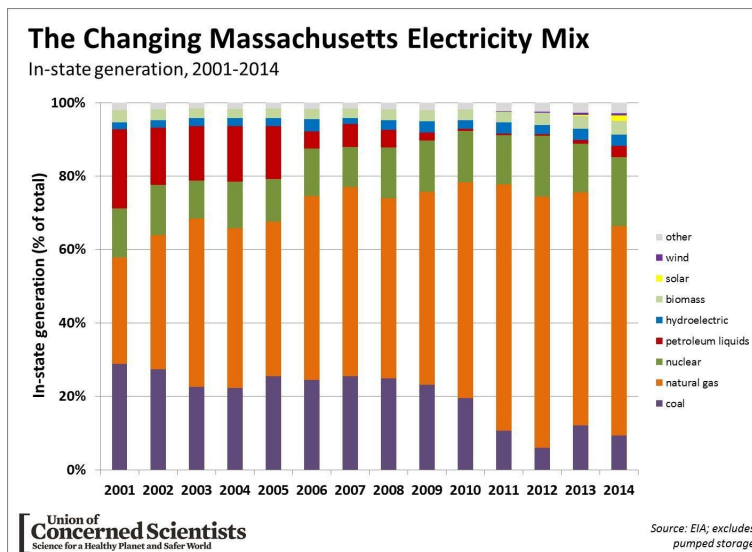
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

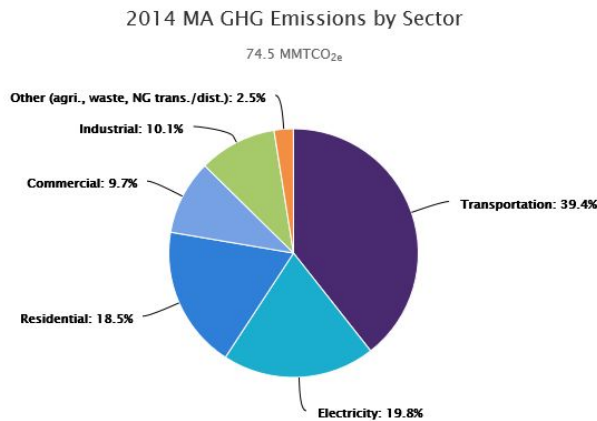
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Virak Uy:

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?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

8. Carbon pricing.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

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

Virak Uy: Yes.

10. 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?*

Virak Uy: Yes.