

Steve Connor

**Hampshire, Franklin
& Worcester**

State Senate



Endorsement Questionnaire

Office Sought: State Senator

Legislative District: Hampshire, Franklin & Worcester

Party: Democratic

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Primary: September 4

Election: November 6

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Introduction: Progressive Mass

About

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

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

Membership

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

How Endorsements Work

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

Sources

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

I. About the Candidate

Steve Connor

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

Steve Connor: For most of my career I have worked with individuals and families to get the benefits and services that they need, primarily through local state and federal government. When I have been unable to get these folks what they need due to rules and regulations and bureaucracy, I then approach things through advocacy and systems change. I want to take all of the experiences that I have lived through and worked on and bring those to the state house to improve public policies and ensure our government is working for people first.

Three Priorities

Housing: Advocating for Housing First is one way I have worked for some of our most vulnerable neighbors. This model gets people housed as quickly as possible and then provides wraparound services to individuals or families in order to make them successful - and it's working!

Public Education: Funding of our schools should not be tied to property taxes. The formula for state funding is overdue for an overhaul. In place of the Foundation Budget, we need to ensure every Massachusetts community has the resources it needs to provide excellent education to all our children and youth.

Healthcare: I am a strong proponent for single payer healthcare or "medicare for all". There is no perfect plan and any design will need adjusting but healthcare is a right not a privilege. We need to share in the cost of it and make sure everyone has access to affordable medical services, prevention education, and the support they need to stay healthy.

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

Steve Connor: My own life and career has prepared me to serve as a state senator. I have worked in human service with children, individuals with disabilities and their families, and veterans and their families for most of my life. I grew up in a working-class family in which my mother was the breadwinner as a registered nurse working at Cooley Dickinson Hospital. My father left high school and joined the Army to go to fight in Korea. Unbeknownst to him his older brother was already going and they wouldn't send two brothers to the same zone if they could help it, so he became part of the German occupation. He never went on to higher education. My father worked in factories, retail stores, as a frozen food manager of a supermarket, and worked as a custodian long enough to get a small retirement.

I raised four children here and when they were young I was making a dollar over minimum-wage and had three part-time jobs just so I could provide them with health insurance. During some of our hardest times, we tried to apply for food stamps but were denied because we got a car loan to have a reliable vehicle to transport our family.

I have navigated the systems of government in many capacities and through many agencies and I see where it works and I also see where it doesn't work on the ground level. I know what happens to people when it doesn't work, and I know the difference it can make when it does.

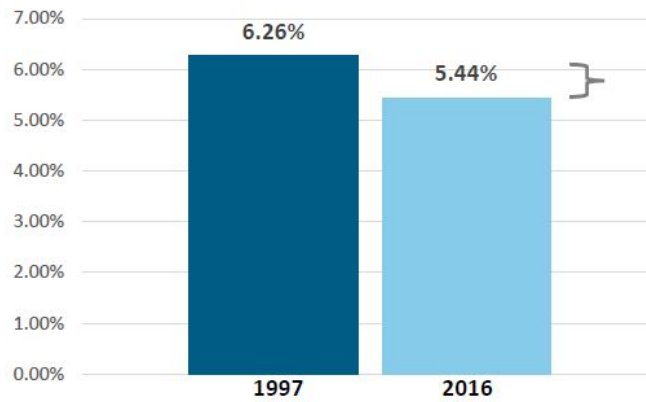
Massachusetts is a great state but we can always strive to do better.

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.

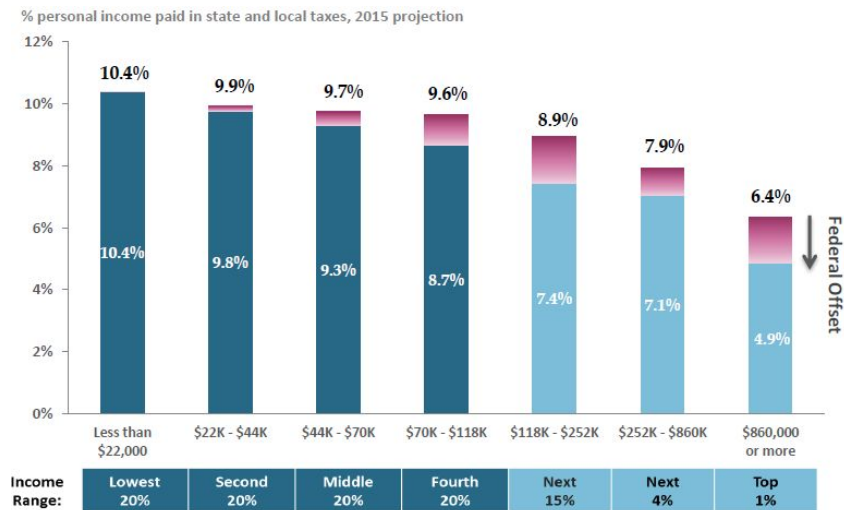
Declining revenues have meant drastic cuts, limiting our ability to invest in our communities and future economic stability.

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?*

Steve Connor: We've done a disservice to the citizens of Massachusetts by reducing taxes and hiding increases in state revenue through user fees and charges for services. We cannot cut taxes, reduce government, and still maintain the standard of living we enjoy.

Corporations are not people. However, corporations and businesses do use the same public infrastructure we do and absolutely need to pay their fair share for its maintenance and improvements.

We should not reduce the state sales tax to 5%. We need to better communicate to our citizens what our tax dollars are used for and why it matters.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I strongly support the Fair Share amendment.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. The Tax Holiday doesn't work as well as intended. Consumers can avoid paying state tax by traveling to neighboring states any week of the year, or can put off major purchases waiting for the next Tax Holiday. Consumers are not making significant purchases they would otherwise not have made simply because of a sales tax savings. It is not an effective or sustainable stimulus for the Massachusetts economy. I do oppose any efforts to extend a sales tax holiday.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Corporations receiving public benefit through the receipt of tax credits owe it to the citizens of the Commonwealth who are incentivizing their business to disclose their progress toward the goals set forth in their agreements. It is a basic measure of accountability between the Commonwealth and the companies.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Corporations and the wealthiest in the state have received significant tax breaks this year from the federal government. It's estimated that nine out of ten of those tax break dollars are not being reinvested in workers, but rather in corporate share buybacks. I do support requiring a living

wage for all employees of corporations receiving tax credits, and access to benefits including health insurance and paid sick time.

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

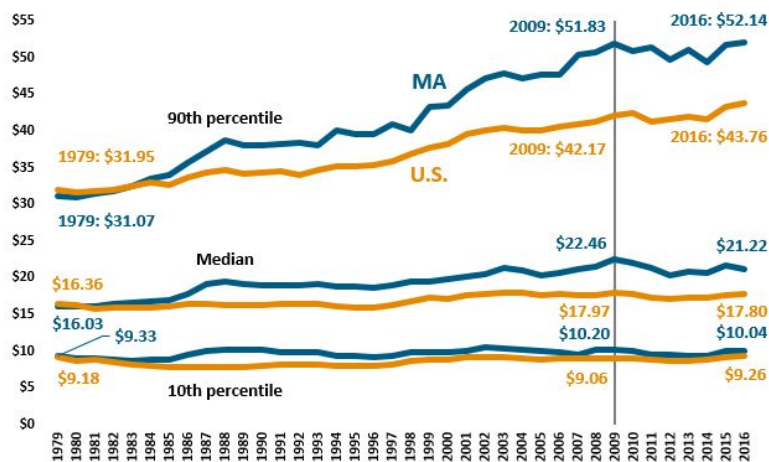
Cumulative Change in U.S. Hourly Wages for Private-Sector Production/Non-Supervisory Workers and Net Productivity, 1948-2015



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?

Steve Connor: The best economic drivers in our district is the University of Massachusetts and Greenfield Community College. We also have an aging population, a number of whom will need services in the coming years and it is time that we pay the people who care for our elders (and our young children) a living wage. Those workers will be able to afford goods and services they cannot currently afford, which will be reinvested into their local economy.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I absolutely support raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: 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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I do support requiring access to up to 16 weeks of paid family leave and 26 weeks of paid medical leave for employees of any business employing more than 50 people for permanent full and part time staff. I support and encourage smaller businesses to strive for the same level of family and medical leave without a state mandate, and would look for ways the state can help provide that access.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I believe workers must absolutely have every opportunity to pursue collective bargaining without interference from management..

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I absolutely oppose efforts to roll back collective bargaining rights of state and

municipal employees.

7. **Wage Theft.** *Do you support legislation to hold businesses responsible for the wage violations of their subcontractors when the work they do is substantially connected to the company's operations?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Absolutely. Any business that skims the wages of their employees or subcontractors should be held accountable.

8. **Mandatory Arbitration.** *Would you support legislation to prohibit the use of mandatory arbitration provisions in employment contracts, i.e., requirements that an employee forfeit the right to sue the employer for discrimination, nonpayment of wages or other illegal conduct?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Mandatory Arbitration has too often been used to silence whistleblowers and workers who have been subject to workplace discrimination or unfair treatment. I would support prohibiting mandatory arbitration in employee contracts.

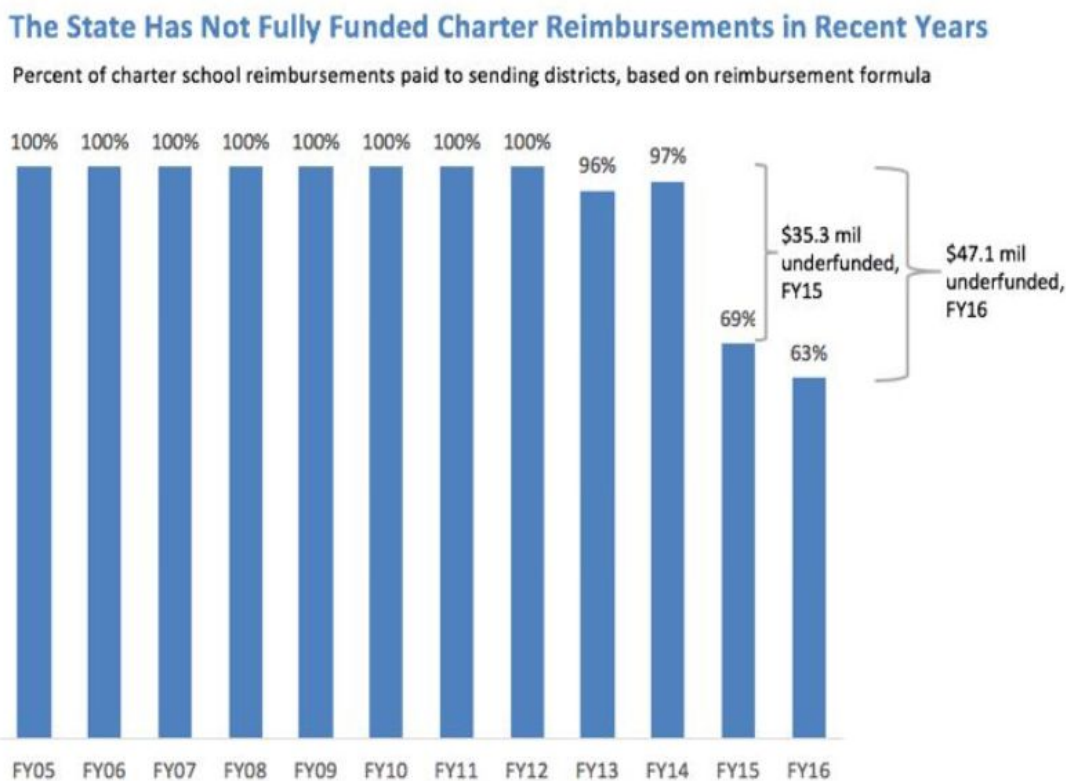
9. **Economic Democracy.** *Would you support legislation to foster and develop employee ownership of businesses in Massachusetts and encourage the formation of cooperatives and/or benefit corporations?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Cooperative ventures and benefit corporations are businesses with deep roots in our communities and they diversify our business base. I would support legislation to foster and develop more such businesses in the Commonwealth.

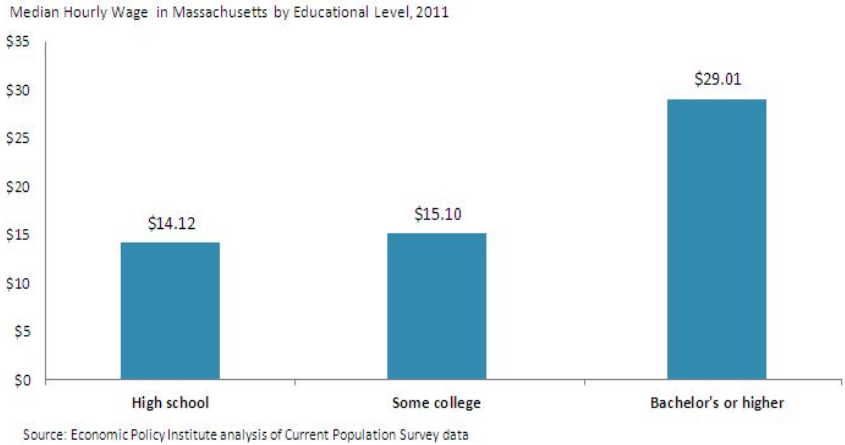
C. EDUCATION

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.

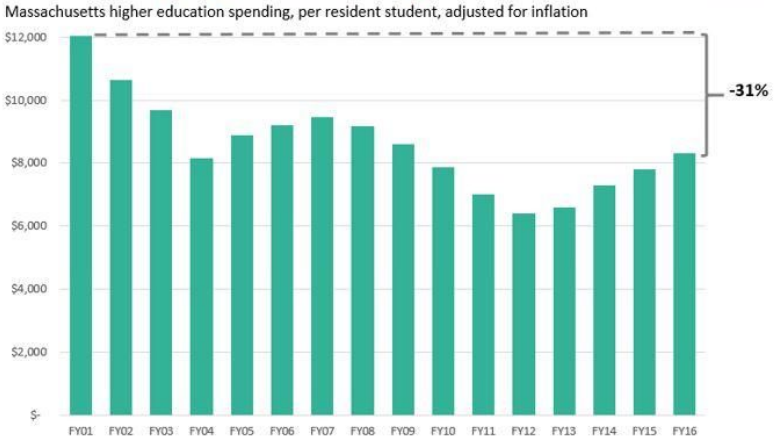


Higher educational attainment leads to higher wages.



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?*

Steve Connor: I am a product of Massachusetts public education from kindergarten through UMass. Our public schools are among the best in the country, but we cannot rest on our laurels. We can always strive to be better. The 21st century requires creative thinkers, problem solvers, and well rounded learners. A top priority for me is revisiting the state's Education Funding Formula - something long overdue - and stop tying school funding to local property taxes. We need to invest in uniformly excellent education across Massachusetts. We need to stop funding Charter Schools out of public school budgets - supporting additional schools requires a bigger pie, not smaller slices. I am not a supporter of high stakes testing for high school graduates. I believe we can significantly reduce student debt by providing subsidies and grants to students who pledge to work in underserved communities for 2 years after graduation from a public university or community college. I would also support asking Attorney General Maura Healy to explore suing the federal government to finally fully fund the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to ensure free appropriate education for all of our children and youth.

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

Steve Connor: I worked as a trained educational advocate for children and youth with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). I understand the constraints on local school districts and I also understand the strong desires of parents for their children to receive the education they need to be self sufficient adults. The process can be overwhelming for families. We can and should do better.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. I would support access to public pre-kindergarten for any child residing in Massachusetts, and believe it will be most effective when integrated into our public schools.

4. *Standardized Testing. Do you oppose the use of high-stakes testing for such things as student promotion, high school graduation, teacher evaluation, and the evaluation of schools and districts?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I oppose the MCAS and high stakes testing.

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?*

Steve Connor:

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?*

Steve Connor: 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?*

Steve Connor: 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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Yes, absolutely, I support fully inclusive, medically accurate age appropriate sexuality and health education.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. Massachusetts residents who graduate from our public schools should be able to access the same financial aid as their peers regardless of documented status. We are better served by far with more educated citizens than fewer.

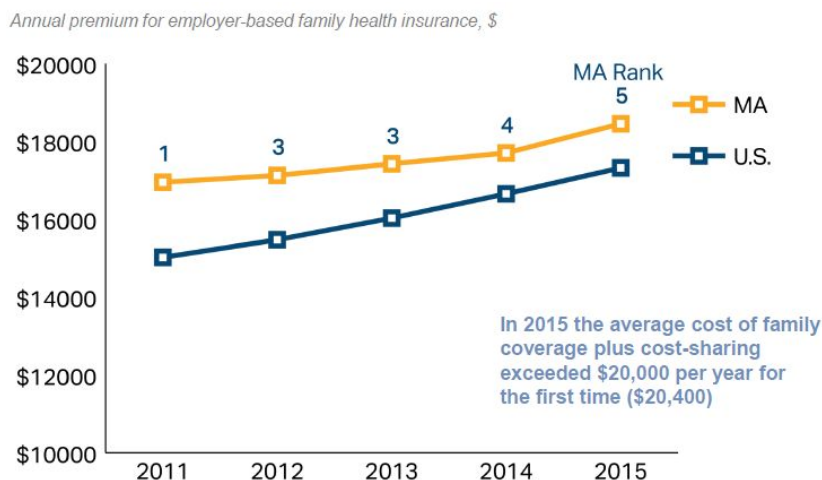
9. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** *Would you support making tuition free at public colleges and universities?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I believe there is a path to making higher education free and accessible for students to be able to graduate debt free.

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.*

Steve Connor: If all residents paid into a single-payer system, standards and policies could be developed regarding procedures and reimbursements that do not impoverish providers but rather allow those providers opportunities stop spending valuable resources on red tape and liability insurance, but improved time with a patient and proper education on healthy living and better choices on care.

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

health care (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).

Steve Connor: I am an advocate of the VA Healthcare System and believe when it is properly funded and free from congressional and administrative meddling, it works for all of our returning service-members, young and old. It has a very effective oversight system from the Office of Inspector General and can be a model for a Massachusetts single payer system. I believe that if the leadership of the current VA Healthcare systems are allowed to use “best practices” that have been learned over the years, we would make great strides in improving our service delivery system. However, this model is currently being used as a political football, under funding and mandate manipulation by opponents of “single payer” in our federal government.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. I believe in single payer health care and I believe Massachusetts can lead the way.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. I unequivocally support full access to abortion care and family planning resources for all women in the Commonwealth. I will vigorously oppose any moves to limit, delay, or obstruct such care.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Dental care should absolutely be on par with every other kind of healthcare in Massachusetts and access to dental care is an important step forward to holistic wellness care for all.

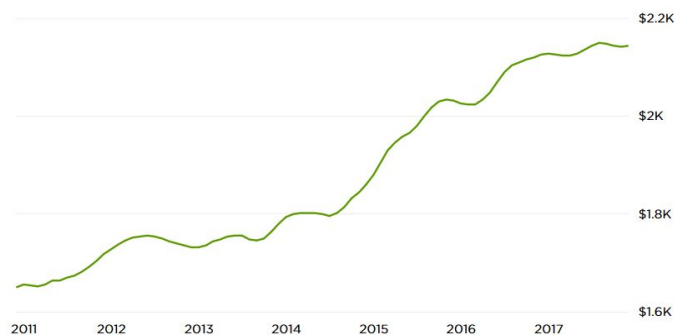
6. *Prescription Drug Pricing. Would you support a drug transparency law, like the one recently passed in California, that requires pharmaceutical companies to publicly justify steep price increases?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Yes, absolutely I believe pharmaceutical companies ought to publicly justify any steep price increases in their products.

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?

Steve Connor: There are currently many designs being developed of “smart neighborhoods” that create affordable housing close to major employers, along with market rate apartments and condominiums, and other models like cohousing that would meet the needs of a majority of our population.

Such designs would reduce the need for significant travel to work, improve the ability to use public transportation, and reduce demand on our roads and bridges. It is important that school systems are a significant part of the planning process so that all area schools would be diverse and of high quality.

We need to provide a much greater number of rental vouchers either through the federal government or through MRVP (Mass. Rental Voucher Program) to address homelessness among residents unable to work, living on state public assistance or on the Social Security network of benefits, which are fixed incomes and often not significant enough income for them to maintain housing without subsidies. The

development of low-demand and supported permanent housing needs to happen regionally, allowing individuals with mental health and/or substance addictions to have a safe and personalized space.

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

Steve Connor: As part of my work with veterans in western Massachusetts, I appear in Housing Court regularly to help ensure that veterans do not lose their housing. I have had a great deal of experience with landlords and motels to keep vulnerable veterans and families housed. I would enhance the Tenant Preservation program that currently exists. This would improve the chances for tenants with mental health disabilities to work with landlords around their lease obligations.

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

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

b. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program?

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. I have seen the great benefit to communities that participate in the CPA.

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?

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes. Absolutely - all of our communities are stronger when we can help our neighbors remain in their homes.

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?

Steve Connor: Yes. Yes, landlords should be required to inform their tenants of the reason for seeking eviction.

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?

Steve Connor: Yes.

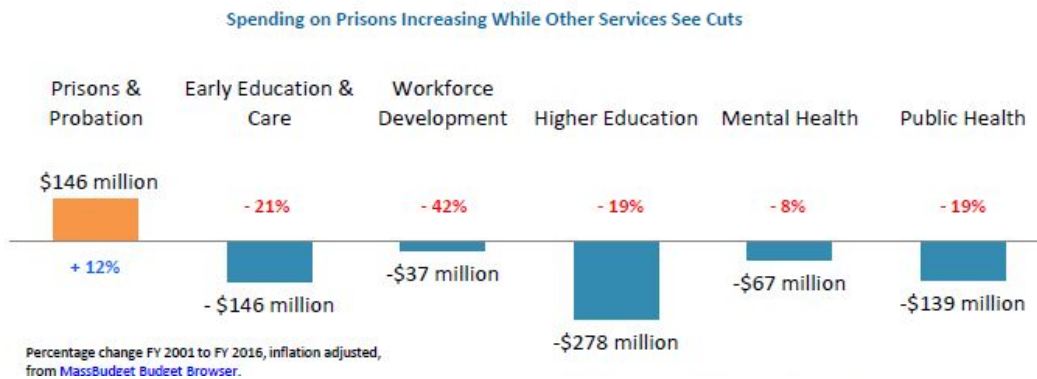
- 8. *Combating Speculation.*** *Would you support legislation to allow cities and towns to impose a graduated tax on private real estate transactions over \$2.5 million, with the money allocated to affordable housing trust funds?*

Steve Connor: Yes.

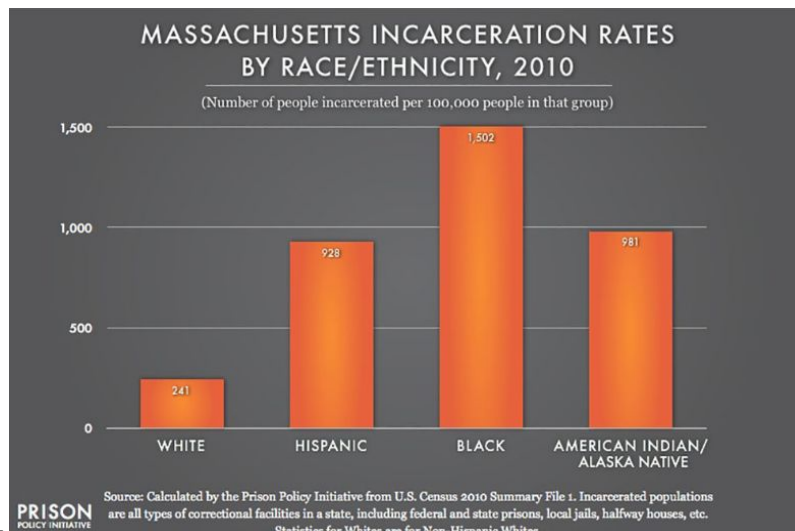
F. RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

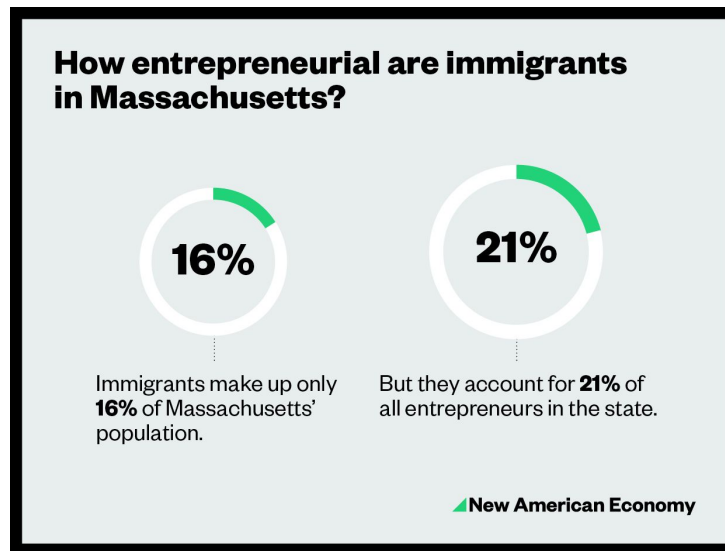
Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds. The social and economic costs of mass incarceration and the policies that created it, in particular, have put our aspirations of “justice for all”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

Steve Connor: There are systems of oppression and injustice that are inherent in our public institutions. We all need to be willing to examine our practices and policies for evidence of systemic oppression and work to dismantle it. This lens must be brought to all legislative areas - housing, criminal justice, education, employment and healthcare policies, to name a few. None of us are free, unless all of us are free, and I am committed to building a strong Massachusetts, one which welcomes the gifts and contributions of all of its residents.

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

Steve Connor: In my work as a Veterans Service Officer, I have worked with homeless veterans to support their ability to live in the neighborhoods of their choice. I have invited women veterans and veterans of color to speak at community events, raising the profile of members of these communities. I am working with colleagues to establish a western Massachusetts chapter of OUTVETS.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I will vigorously work to protect this law and expand protections for our Trans* neighbors.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Conversion therapy has long ago been exposed for what it is - an anti-gay ideology - and what it is not, namely an effective therapy. Rather, it has generations of our neighbors for years and no youth in Massachusetts should be subjected to it again.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I do support eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid offenses, and I would also support the review of all current incarcerations of citizens sentenced under older marijuana laws.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. The science of adolescent development clearly calls for this important change if our systems of justice are indeed oriented toward providing justice and redemption above merely punishment and isolation.

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)?*

Steve Connor: The entire SORI system needs to be reviewed and better understood by the public. However, with regard to H3065, I agree with the provision of "the defendant is no more than 3 years older than the minor but not in support of the 2 year older standard if the minor is under 12 years old. At this time I don't have enough social science research to feel comfortable with this provision. I would need further review.

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Unequivocally. There is ample evidence of the psychological harm of solitary confinement. I would add to the categories of at-risk populations veterans with PTSD and/or Traumatic Brain Injury.

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

Steve Connor: 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?

Steve Connor: 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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Without question.

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?*

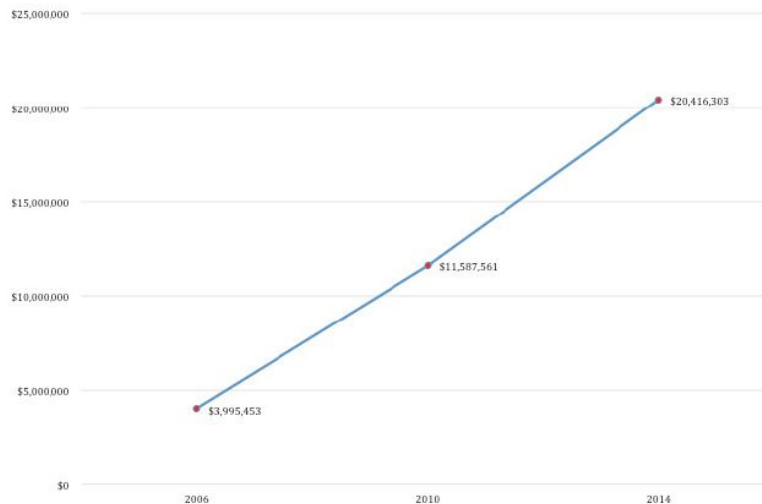
Steve Connor: Yes. Yes, this would be a benefit to everyone on our roads in the Commonwealth.

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.*

Steve Connor:

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?*

Steve Connor:

4. ***Transparency.** Massachusetts is one of only two states where the Governor's Office, the Legislature,*

and the Judiciary claim full exemption from the public records laws. Do you support ending that exemption?

Steve Connor: I do think this needs to be re-examined in the context of today's political landscape. Sunshine is the best disinfectant, as they say.

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

Steve Connor: 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"?*

Steve Connor: Yes. As a former cook at a Head Start day care center, this issue is near and dear to my heart.

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

- a. *Election day voter registration*

Steve Connor: Yes. Absolutely.

- b. *Automatic voter registration*

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

- d. *No-fault absentee voting*

Steve Connor: Yes.

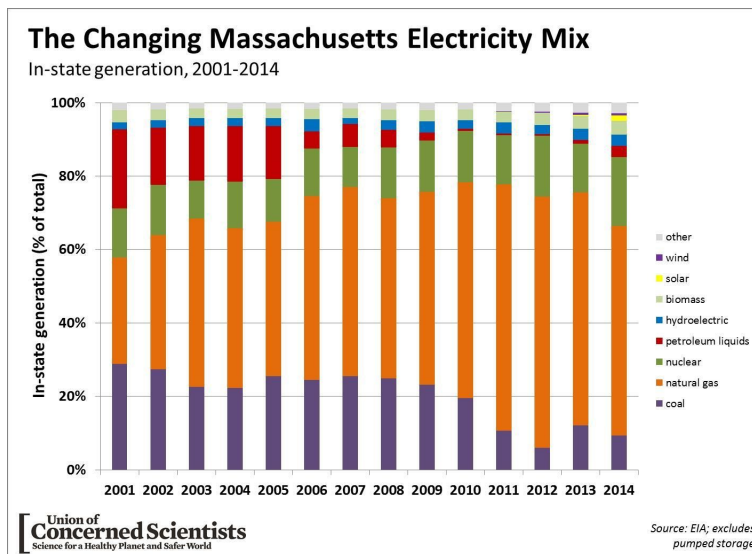
H. SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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.

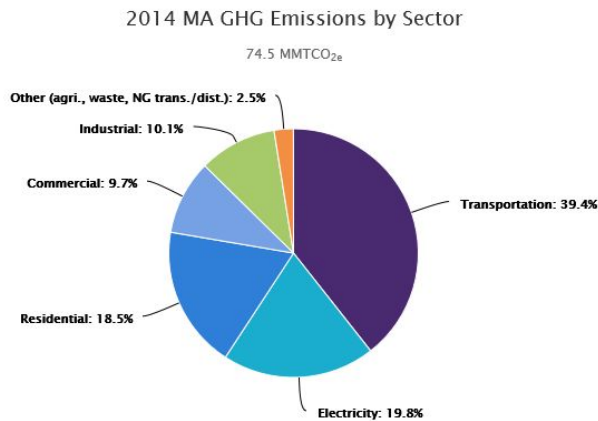
Equity issues loom large, as low-income communities and communities of color are often the most vulnerable to natural disasters and bear the brunt of pollution. In 2014, Governor Deval Patrick signed an executive order directing all state agencies to devote resources to protect the health, safety, and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

Steve Connor:

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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. I do support this ban on single use plastic bags - it has been successfully implemented in my home town already.

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?*

Steve Connor: 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?*

Steve Connor: Yes. Absolutely. It is past time to set aggressive renewable energy goals. This will have benefits for our economy and for our citizens' health as well.

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?

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

I would - this is especially important in light of what is happening at the federal Environmental Protection Agency right now.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

8. **Carbon pricing.**

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

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

Steve Connor: Yes.

A fee on fossil fuel emissions will promote investment in renewable, green infrastructure and reduce Massachusetts' contribution to global climate change,

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?*

Steve Connor:

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

Steve Connor: Yes. Not only this, but also a more equitable distribution of resources for RTA's. Currently 1 of every 6.25 cents of the sales tax goes to the MBTA, while transportation in other Massachusetts' cities and our rural communities is suffering.

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?*

Steve Connor: