

**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 CONGRESSIONAL
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**



Date: 2/9/2020

Candidate: Ihssane Leckey

Office Sought: U.S. House of Representatives - Massachusetts Fourth Congressional District

Party: Democratic Party

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Email questions to elections@progressivemass.com.

Questionnaire Responses (excepting sections labeled CONFIDENTIAL) will be published on our website.

I. About You

1. Why are you running for office? And what will your top 3 priority pieces of legislation if elected?

I'm running for Congress to fight for an economy where one job guarantees a living wage, and where clean water and food, housing, and healthcare are rights for all people.

I live in a district with massive inequity of resources. From the quality of education to that of air and water, the differences are stark between the wealthiest zip codes and those of low-income communities.

My top three priorities in Congress will be to pass a Green New Deal, single-payer Medicare for All, and my Universal Family Care proposal, which would guarantee 36 weeks of paid leave for new parents (including adoptive and foster parents), free and high-quality universal childcare, universal pre-K, and free school meals.

In 2020, we must elect people who will change the broken status quo. We need public servants who will work to build an intersectional movement across the nation that will stop corporate greed, and guarantee dignity and equity for all people. Household and small business budgets are buckling from rising costs of housing, healthcare, and transportation. This will only change if we demand more from our politicians.

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I believe we need more people in policy-making positions who have suffered directly from unjust policies, and who have a sense of urgency about improving the quality of life for all people. I believe my experience as an immigrant, a young mother, as someone who has struggled to pay bills and faced housing discrimination, and as a Wall Street regulator who has experience holding big banks accountable gives me unique insight into how to make our political and economic system work for all of us.

I came to the U.S. when I was 20 years old, and all I had was a suitcase, and a big American Dream. I attended community college in New York City, while earning tipped wages as a server. I know how it feels to fear reporting sexual harassment and assault because you're not protected by a union.

After earning a Women in Math Scholarship to Boston University, I became the first person in my family to graduate with a college degree. I graduated while we were still suffering the ramification of the 2008 financial crisis - after seeing how the federal government cut government assistance to those who are in most need, and watched as municipal governments

went bankrupt, I committed to working to end corruption by big financial institutions and seek justice for those who were victims of unchecked corporate greed. As a Federal Reserve Special Examiner, I worked everyday to make sure that giant financial institutions like Goldman Sachs were held accountable, and will never be bailed out by our public money again.

When Donald Trump was elected, like millions of Americans, I was appalled by his Muslim Ban, corruption, attacks on women, and abuse of immigrants and refugees. I also saw how the Trump administration was undermining the work of the Federal Reserve, and again gave big banks an opportunity to gamble with our economy and pensions. I knew from the high student loans, skyrocketing credit card debt tied to the brutal cost of healthcare, and the stagnant wages regardless of increased productivity, we're on the brink of another economic crisis. Our only hope to rebuild safety again, is to build a people's congress, that has the interest of the people at 100%.

So, I started organizing full-time for a Green New Deal, single-payer Medicare for All, a homes guarantee, reproductive justice, universal childcare, and free education. As an organizer, I learned quickly that too many of our members of Congress lack a sense of urgency to push for meaningful change, so I decided to challenge my Congressman.

Today, I'm a Muslim immigrant who is running for Congress to build a society where one job guarantees a living wage, and where clean water and food, housing, healthcare, and quality education are rights for all of us, not just those who can afford them.

3. What do you view as the biggest barriers to progressive policy on the federal level?

The influence of money from big banks, Big Pharma, the fossil fuel corporations, and other giant for-profit corporations who lobby politicians to stop progressive policies.

We also don't have enough elected officials who prioritize maintaining personal power over building people power for meaningful change. I'm encouraged, however, that community organizers all over the country are running to change our broken political system, and we're backed by grassroots advocacy groups who are organizing strategically to maximize our collective efforts.

II. The Issues

Our questionnaire is based on our [Progressive Platform](#): Shared Prosperity, All Means All/Racial and Social Justice, Good Government and Strong Democracy, and Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection.

A. An Equitable Tax System

1. What does a progressive tax system look like? Which specific proposals would you advocate for?

A progressive tax system is one that ensures our government has the ability to guarantee all people the right to public education (K-higher Ed), healthcare, housing, and transportation.

A progressive tax system is one where billionaire corporations like Amazon actually pay taxes, and pay a fair share.

Our tax structure needs massive reform starting with raising the top marginal tax rate for individuals to 48%, and the corporate rate to 40%. However, we also have to eliminate a long list of loopholes that exist to primarily benefit billionaires and greedy corporations, including

B. Jobs That Pay a Living Wage

1. **Minimum Wage.** The gap between productivity and wages has grown dramatically since 1973. Moreover, the federal minimum wage remains stuck at \$7.25—what it was in 2009. Would you support legislation to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour?
Yes
 - a. And eliminate the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers? **Yes**
 - b. And index the minimum wage to inflation? **Yes**
2. **Retirement Security.** With the decline of pensions and other defined-benefit retirement plans in the workplace, retirement is becoming more insecure, and seniors are having to work longer just to stay afloat. Would you support legislation to....
 - a. Increase the benefits provided by Social Security? **Yes**
 - b. Raising the cap on earnings that are taxed for Social Security? (Currently, only earnings up to \$118,500 are subject to the payroll tax.) **Yes**
3. **Paid Leave.** The US is the only industrial nation without paid family leave. Would you support federal legislation ensuring that workers can take up to 12 weeks of paid leave for a pregnancy, the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from a serious illness, or to care for a seriously ill family member? **Yes, I support 36 weeks.**
4. **Union Rights.** Unions play a key role in building a strong middle-class; however, unions have been under attack in recent years. Would you support the following efforts to strengthen the role of unions in our economy:
 - a. Prohibiting “right-to-work” laws at the state level? **Yes**
 - b. Requiring employers to recognize a union when a majority of workers in a bargaining unit sign valid authorization cards? **Yes**
 - c. Prohibiting employers from interfering with unionization efforts, such as by compelling worker attendance at anti-union meetings? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

C. Quality, Affordable Health Care

1. **Medicare for All.** Would you support the creation of a single payer/“Medicare for All” health insurance system in the country that would guarantee health care as a right? **Yes**
2. **Prescription Drug Prices.** Prescription drug prices in the US are consistently higher than in other countries. Which policies would you support to lower the cost of prescription drugs?
 - a. Allowing Medicare to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies? **Yes**
 - b. Allowing patients, pharmacists, and wholesalers to buy low-cost prescription drugs from Canada and other industrialized countries? **Yes**
 - c. Allowing the federal government to manufacture lower-cost generic versions of prescription drugs when the market does not offer them? **Yes**
3. **Reproductive Rights.** Would you support repealing the Hyde Amendment, which bars the use of federal funds to pay for abortion except to save the life of the woman, or if the pregnancy arises from incest or rape? **Yes**
4. **Opioid Crisis.** An essential part of addressing the opioid crisis, safe consumption sites allow medical professionals to respond to overdoses and engage participants in medical and behavioral health services. Would you support the legalization of SCSs? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

D. Quality, Free Publicly Funded Education

1. **Education Equity.** More than six and a half decades out from the *Brown vs. Board* Supreme Court ruling, our public education systems remain highly segregated and unequal. Please name three policies you would advocate for in order to address this.

We have to first establish that education is a public good, not a commodity. That starts by significantly increasing federal funding for education by establishing a national per-pupil spending floor, reforming local property-tax funding model to make sure public school funding is equitable, and increase Title I funding. We also have to increase funding for school integration policies, and allows federal funding to be used for desegregation efforts.

2. **Charter School Funding.** The NAACP has proposed a moratorium on public funds for charter school expansion until a national audit has been completed to determine the impact of charter growth in each state. Do you support such a moratorium? **Yes**
3. **Charter School Accountability.** Do you support requiring that charter schools comply with the same transparency and accountability requirements as public schools? **Yes**

4. **High-Stakes Testing.** Do you support prohibiting the use of standardized testing as a primary or significant factor in closing a school, firing a teacher, or making any other high-stakes decisions? **Yes**
5. **Student Loan Debt.** Student loan debt is holding back the economy, as graduates are unable to make important long-term investments in their future. Presidential candidates have put forth various schemes to forgive student loan debt. Do you support doing so, and what would your ideal scheme look like? **Yes, I support the cancelation of student debt.**
6. **Tuition-Free Higher Education.** More and more jobs are requiring a college degree, but the cost of higher education has been growing faster than wages, contributing to a ballooning student debt burden. Would you support legislation to guarantee free tuition at public colleges and universities? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

E. Affordable, Decent Housing

1. **Tenant Rights.** Would you support legislation to establish a national just cause eviction standard, which would limit the grounds upon which a landlord may evict a tenant? **Yes**
2. **Inclusive Communities.** Federal funding can be a major source of leverage in shaping state and municipal policy. Would you support legislation to tie transportation or housing funding to...
 - a. Ending exclusionary zoning practices? **Yes**
 - b. Repealing state prohibitions on rent stabilization policies? **Yes**
3. **Public Housing.** Would you support the repeal of the Faircloth Amendment, which bans HUD from funding the construction or operation of new public housing units beyond the total that existed in 1999? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

F. A Fair and Efficient Criminal Justice System

1. **Ending Mass Incarceration.** The past few years have seen a growing recognition that the “tough on crime” legislation passed in the 1980s and 1990s has had a devastating impact on communities of color and has not improved public safety. Which of the following proposals do you support?
 - a. Legalizing marijuana? **Yes**

- b. Repealing mandatory minimums for non-violent drug offenses? **Yes**
 - c. Eliminating cash bail, so that no one is held in jail solely for an inability to pay? **Yes**
 - d. Abolishing the death penalty? **Yes**
 - e. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which has been proven to have significant racial disparities? **Yes**
 - f. Barring the federal government and state and local jurisdiction from contracting with private corporations to run prisons and detention facilities? **Yes**
- 2. Prison Conditions.** In addition to having incarceration rates that far [outpace](#) those of other countries, the US is known for violating both domestic and international law in the conditions of its prisons. Which of the following steps would you support to emphasize the rehabilitative, as opposed to punitive, nature of the system and protect basic rights?
- a. Preventing companies from charging prisoners unreasonable fees for banking and telecommunications services? **Yes**
 - b. Requiring that incarcerated individuals be paid for their work at a rate no lower than the federal minimum wage? **Yes**
 - c. Restoring Pell Grant access to prisoners? **Yes**
 - d. Limiting the use of solitary confinement to no more than 15 consecutive days, beyond which it is defined as torture by the United Nations? **Yes, we must prohibit solitary confinement entirely.**
- 3. Police Accountability.** Lax or nonexistent systems of accountability and perverse incentives at the federal, state, and local level, combined with a legacy of systemic racism, too often lead to law enforcement neither enforcing the law nor keeping the public safe. Which of the following steps would you support to promote a more humane, community-focused policing?
- a. Prohibiting the transfer of military weapons from the federal government to state and local law enforcement? **Yes**
 - b. Eliminating qualified immunity, which allows law enforcement to violate people's constitutional rights with impunity? **Yes**
 - c. Restricting the use of civil asset forfeiture by police departments and prosecutors' offices? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

G. A Humane Immigration System

1. **Comprehensive Immigration Reform.** The approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US are important contributors to strong economies and strong communities. Due to political and economic instability abroad, as well as a labyrinthine and discriminatory immigration bureaucracy at home, this number could very well continue to grow. However, comprehensive immigration reform legislation has remained elusive in Washington. Which of the following policies would you support?
 - a. The DREAM Act, which would allow certain US-raised immigrant youth to earn lawful permanent residence and American citizenship? **Yes**
 - b. A path for undocumented immigrants to gain US citizenship? **Yes**
 - c. Repealing the three-year, ten-year, and permanent bars of reentry for undocumented immigrants? **Yes**
 - d. Decriminalizing border crossing? **Yes**
2. **Upholding Rights, Ending Perverse Incentives.** Every day, we hear new unconscionable stories about how the US is treating immigrants at the border, fueled by both bad laws and lawlessness at the federal level. Our immigration system should reflect our values. Which of the following policies would you support?
 - a. Ending the practice of family detention? **Yes**
 - b. Ending the practice of family separation? **Yes**
 - c. Ending ICE's daily bed quota? **Yes**
 - d. Imposing a moratorium on the construction of new detention facilities? **Yes**
 - e. Abolishing ICE? **Yes**
3. **Ending Mass Deportations.** Would you support a moratorium on deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform bill is passed? **Yes**
4. **Refugees.** In October of 2019, the number of refugees resettled in the US hit zero, and the Trump administration would like to keep it that way going forward, abandoning historic humanitarian commitments. What do you see as the appropriate number of refugees for the US to accept each year? **No limit**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

H. A Diverse and Welcoming Society

1. **LGBTQ Rights.** Over the past several years, we have seen numerous states try to deny trans individuals the right to exist in public spaces as well as conservative lawsuits

seeking to legalize discrimination against LGBTQ individuals. Would you support legislation to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Civil Rights Act of 1964? **Yes**

2. **Reparations.** Would you support legislation to create a commission to study the impact of slavery on the social, political, and economic life of the US and propose appropriate remedies (such as HR40)? **Yes**
3. **Sexual Harassment.** Would you support legislation to end the use of forced arbitration clauses in sexual harassment cases? **Yes**
4. **Gun Violence Prevention.** The US has the largest number of guns per capita in the world--and consequently one of the highest rates of gun deaths. For too long, the federal government has refused to play a constructive role in preventing gun violence. Which of the following proposals would you advocate for?
 - a. Reinstating the federal assault weapons ban? **Yes**
 - b. Banning high-capacity magazine ammunitions? **Yes**
 - c. Requiring a license to purchase a gun? **Yes**
 - d. Limiting the number of guns an individual can buy to one per month? **Yes**
 - e. Repealing the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which shields the gun industry from lawsuits? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

I. Good Government and Strong Democracy

1. **Comprehensive Democracy Reform.** Will you commit to voting on HR 1, the For The People Act, as introduced in 2018? Among other things, HR1 (“For the People Act”) contains automatic voter registration, Election Day Registration, the expansion of early voting, the prohibition of partisan gerrymandering, and other vital reforms. **Yes**
2. **Ending Prison Disenfranchisement.** Currently, Maine and Vermont are the only states that provide full suffrage to the incarcerated. Do you support ending the disenfranchisement for those currently incarcerated? **Yes**
3. **Ranked Choice Voting.** Do you support the 2020 ballot initiative to adopt ranked choice voting for state, county, and (non-presidential) federal elections? **Yes**
4. **Campaign Finance -- Part I.** Do you support public financing of Congressional elections? **Yes**
5. **Campaign Finance -- Part II.** Would you support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision and allow limits on corporate political spending? **Yes**

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

J. Sustainable Infrastructure & Environmental Protection

1. **Green New Deal.** Do you support the concept of a Green New Deal? If so, what should it look like? **Yes**

The climate emergency is the greatest existential threat to humanity. It is imperative that we divest from fossil fuels, protect our threatened ecosystems and indigenous lands, and transition our economy to net zero-carbon by 2030.

As a mother of a seven-year-old daughter, Nora, I worry every day about the world that we are leaving for my daughter's generation, where rising sea levels, raging superstorms, historic droughts, and rampant wildfires will be the new normal if we do not take action. During my childhood, my family often experienced water-insecurity in Morocco; I understand the crippling effects that climate-induced shortages can have on health, family life and societal prosperity I am in this fight to ensure that we turn back the tide and protect our natural resources and lands for future generations.

To combat this monumental crisis, we must implement a Green New Deal. Anything less than such a massive economic mobilization that quickly creates a new national energy system and infrastructure that utilizes 100% renewable energy would be insufficient. Furthermore, a Green New Deal would go a long way towards reshaping our society to be more equitable and economically just -- thanks to measures that would, for example, create millions of good-paying jobs and safe housing units.

As part of my commitment to a Green New Deal, I advocate for a Green Homes Guarantee, which would offer decarbonized housing to the homeless and housing insecure through the construction of at least ten million new units of carbon zero, public housing units over the next ten years. Once in office, I will lead Congressional investment in the creation of a carbon-free, multimodal transit system that includes fully electric inter-regional rail, rapid bus transit, with paratransit and accessibility upgrades to guarantee access for disabled riders.

I will also work to ensure a just transition for workers in the fossil fuel industry, by creating a national job training and placement program, as well as early retirement and pension protection programs for older workers. Such initiatives would fully replace displaced workers' wages and offer health coverage to these people and their families while they are retrained and found jobs in the new Green Energy/Transit economy.

2. **Transitioning to Clean Energy.** We need to rapidly decarbonize our economy if we are to keep global warming within safe levels. Which of the following policies would you support to accelerate that transition? **Yes**
 - a. Setting a goal of 100 percent clean energy generation and use by 2035? **Yes**
 - b. Putting a price on carbon emissions and investing the revenue in clean energy and green infrastructure? **Yes**
 - c. Prohibiting new leases for coal, oil, and gas on all federal lands and waters? **Yes**

- d. Opposing any legislation that authorizes, or expedites the permitting or approval of, new fossil fuel pipelines? **Yes**
3. **Climate Emergency.** With rising temperatures and sea levels threatening significant harm to Massachusetts' coast, ecosystems, public health and well-being, do you support declaring a Climate Emergency to drive an aggressive response? **Yes**
4. **Clean Water.** Would you support legislation to require natural gas drillers to disclose the chemicals that go into the ground during the hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") process and to close the so-called "Halliburton loophole," which prevents the EPA from conducting rigorous oversight? **Yes**
5. **Environmental Justice.** Would you support legislation to codify environmental justice into law; require federal agencies to address environmental justice through agency actions and permitting decisions; and strengthen legal protections against environmental injustice for communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities? **Yes**
6. **Electric Vehicles.** Would you support legislation to phase out the sale of gasoline- or diesel-powered vehicles by 2030? **Yes**
7. **Public Transportation.** What would be your top priorities for federal reinvestment in transportation and infrastructure if elected?

Passing a Green New Deal is of highest priority, which includes providing reliable, frequent, and connected transportation options for everyone in our country. In Massachusetts, we need more commuter rail stops, dedicated bus lanes in areas with heavy traffic, multimodal lanes in towns and cities, and to connect all parts of the state to affordable public transit options. For some parts, bus and other shuttle services will make most sense, while other parts will need high speed rail. I support projects like the South Coast Rail, East-Coast Rail, and linking North and South Stations. As Congresswoman, I look to build state and local coalitions to ensure that federal funding is adequately targeted towards communities and projects that need it the most.

Please use this space to share any other principles or proposals on this issue.

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.

To have the people's interest at 100%, I reject corporate PAC and lobbyist money, fossil fuel executive money, and developer money while running and in congress. I am running to put the power back into the hands of the people, and the people have been fueling this campaign with their generous donations and volunteer hours. Onwards!