



## **PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS**

### **2020 SHERIFF QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Date:** 7/22/2020

**Candidate:** Patrick McDermott

**Office Sought:** Norfolk County Sheriff

**Party:** Democrat

**Website:** [www.patrickmcdermott.org](http://www.patrickmcdermott.org)

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

## Questions about Your Candidacy & Platform

### 1. What values and beliefs govern your corrections philosophy?

*I envision a Sheriff's office whose primary role is that of the county's Chief Public Safety Officer. This vision includes not only a properly and efficiently run county corrections system, but the implementation of a holistic approach to addressing the core issues that undermine public safety across the county. I believe that we need to re-evaluate how we understand "public safety" in our county and our state. We cannot talk about "public safety" if the public does not feel safe, and when issues of racism, housing insecurity, economic insecurity, substance addiction, and more threaten the livelihoods of our neighbors, we must understand these issues to be public safety issues.*

*In terms of corrections, I believe that the Sheriff's Office has the responsibility and the opportunity to focus on prevention, rehabilitation, and recidivism. When individuals enter into the House of Corrections, I want the focus to be on setting them up for success when they re-enter society, through education and job training programs as well as through necessary counseling and substance-use counseling to help them recognize triggers and threats to recidivism.*

*At the same time, I want to use the Sheriff's Office to help prevent individuals from entering the House of Corrections in the first place, through community engagement and the promotion of programs and mentorship opportunities that give individuals both hope and opportunity to live productive, meaningful lives.*

*Finally, when individuals complete their time, I want to make sure that they are set up for success outside of prison – both through training and education within the House of Corrections but also through partnerships with housing, job training, and counseling programs that allow them to feel supported and provide the necessary resources to stay out of prison.*

### 2. What are your qualifications for being sheriff?

*I bring to the Norfolk County Sheriff's office a breadth of experiences and community-based work, both as an elected official and in my volunteer work (including serving as past-President of the Bar Association of Norfolk County, past-President of Massachusetts Registers of Probate, and past-President of Quincy Rotary Club, an international service organization focused on the health and wellbeing of every individual). As a lawyer and former prosecutor, I understand the multiple forces at play both pre- and post-conviction. Additionally, having served as the Norfolk County Register of Probate for the last 18 years, I have extensive knowledge of how the county legal system works and I bring an extensive network of community- and county-based connections and resources to the role of sheriff, resources that will not only help inmates*

*in the House of Corrections but that will also help individuals across the county avoid entering into the HoC or returning to it. As Register of Probate, I have focused my entire administration on access to justice issues, ensuring that socially disadvantaged members of Norfolk County have access to legal services and advice, including through programs such as the Lawyer for a Day Program that provides legal services for disadvantaged individuals; a Domestic Violence Clinic run in partnership with DOVE (Quincy) to provide full-time legal services dedicated to the Probate Court; and a Guardianship Clinic that helps families with children with special needs transition into adulthood and assist extended family members in taking guardianship of children because of the ravages of addiction in the immediate family.*

**3. What policies and programs of the current sheriff would you eliminate or change and why, and what new policies would you add? Please address the following areas:**

*As Sheriff, I plan to institute a stem-to-stern review of the entire Sheriff's Office using a metrics-based evaluation to ensure that services are being adequately provided to match the needs of the county.*

- a. Educational opportunities
  - *Increase youth programming including expanding the Sheriff's camp to include a location in the southern part of the county, increase participation from one week to two weeks.*
  - *Implement a "counselor-in-training" program at the camp for kids 14-17, to increase their leadership skills and keep them on the right path.*
  - *Re-evaluate the existing GED program in the House of Corrections to ensure that it is focused and meeting the needs of inmates during and post-incarceration*
  - *Partner with local community colleges to ensure continued education post-release and provide necessary job-based skills*
- b. Employment and job training
  - *Work with our friends in labor unions and community-based instructors to institute education and training programs for inmates to gain valuable skills in a variety of trades that will give them the ability to secure employment and be self-sufficient after they are released.*
- c. Personal growth (parenting, anti-violence, etc.)
  - *Create programs and units within the correctional facility to address the needs and issues of specific groups who need specialized services, such as veterans who often deal with substance abuse and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, to identify the root causes of their problems and redirect them towards the right path before returning to their community (see below for "Addiction")*
  - *Work with health care professionals and non-profit organizations to address addiction and help people get the services they need, before they are in crisis*

- *Work to break cycles of domestic violence by working closely with victims (including notifications of release of abusers) as well as providing training, counseling, and programming for abusers in custody.*
  - *Seek out and focus on the perspectives of diverse ethnic communities and immigrant populations across Norfolk County when developing policies and programming in the Sheriff's Office*
- d. Any other anti-recidivism measures
- *Ensure that prior to leaving the system, prisoners are able to secure health care (including addiction and mental health care), employment, housing and other services to set them on a path to success and reduce the chances of recidivism.*
  - *Work with local law enforcement professionals and probation officers and secure non-profit agency partnerships to ensure receipt and continuity of services for parolees in order for them stay on the right path forward.*
- e. Informing detainees and inmates of their voting rights, and (for felons) their post-sentence voting rights
- *Conduct voter registration drives for inmates during election times and make the population available for other non-profit and civics-minded organizations to come in and teach inmates about voting and civics.*
- f. Addiction (see also specific questions below)
- *Create programs and units within the correctional facility to address the needs and issues of specific groups who need specialized services, such as veterans who often deal with substance abuse and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, to identify the root causes of their problems and redirect them towards the right path before returning to their community.*
  - *Increase diversion programs, utilizing my relationships in the Trial Court through our District, Probate & Family, Drug, Veterans, and Housing Courts, to get people the help they need.*
  - *Ensure upon reentry that support services are available to inmates with addiction and substance abuse disorders.*

**4. Transparency: If elected, will you commit to issuing annual reports that include basic statistics on detainees and inmates? Will you also commit to issuing annual reports covering the following?**

*I will release annual reports about basic statistics on detainees and inmates. As a public agency, we have an obligation to the public to be transparent.*

- a. Information on public accreditation findings  
Yes
- b. Prison Rape Elimination Act audits  
Yes
- c. Suicides  
Yes

- d. Claims of abuse and lawsuits against the sheriff's department (whether filed by prisoners, employees, attorneys or family members)?

Yes

**5. What professional experience do you have with addicts and addiction, and how would you describe your attitude toward addiction?**

*As the Norfolk County Register of Probate, I have dealt firsthand with individuals and families impacted by addiction. As the Register of Probate, I work with families through the District Court to address family issues of addiction and substance abuse. In this role, I have developed a series of interventions to help break cycles of addiction and abuse. I see addiction as a disease and a mental health issue. While I understand that addiction often leads individuals to engage in criminal acts, we have to see addiction as a problem to be solved through medical and behavioral interventions, rather than incarceration, whenever possible.*

*In questions 6-9 the word "support," means willing to publicly endorse and publicly and privately encourage the legislature to act. Add any qualifications to your support, as needed.*

**6. For people who have not been convicted of any offense, do you support a policy of having them be detained in a community-based healthcare facility (absent specific individualized issues)?**

Yes.

**7. Do you support the option of medical treatments for addiction, such as methadone and buprenorphine, under appropriate medical supervision and where considered appropriate?**

*My concern in supporting this is replacing one addiction with another. Under certain medical recommendations, I would be open to supporting medical treatments to help transition individuals from addiction.*

**8. Do you support the option of safe injection of drugs, including heroin, for addicts under appropriate medical supervision and where considered appropriate?**

No

**9. Do you support the elimination of cash bail unless individual findings are made that the detainee is a flight risk? Are there other situations in which you believe cash bail is appropriate?**

Yes

**10. What are your views on isolating prisoners (sometimes called solitary confinement) as punishment for violating rules both generally and with respect to the specific changes required by the CJR Bill which are being circumvented in many cases?**

*Solitary confinement should be used sparingly and in short duration, not as punishment but as a means to protect an inmate or the security of other inmates.*

**11. The Norfolk County Sheriff's Office currently does not have a 287(g) agreement with the federal government, i.e., the name for agreements in which corrections officers are trained as federal ICE agents. Do you intend to keep the Office out of this program?**

*Yes.*

**11. Has a complaint or lawsuit ever been filed against you for excessive force, a civil rights violation, discrimination, or abuse of your authority? If so, please provide details and the outcome of the complaint/lawsuit.**

*No.*