



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS  
2020 LEGISLATIVE  
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Candidate:** Rebecca ("Becky") Coletta

**Office Sought:** Plymouth & Barnstable (Senate)

**Party:** Democratic

**Website:** [www.beckycoletta.com](http://www.beckycoletta.com)

**Twitter:** @beckyforsenate

**Facebook:** /votebeckycoletta

**Instagram:** /beckyforsenate

## **I. About You**

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

**BC:** I am running for office because I believe we need more than politics as usual. I have supported Democratic politicians since I joined the college Democrats in the 1980s, during the Reagan era. After 2016, I see that I have not done enough. I have served in local office, I have worked on campaigns for others, I have supported progressive causes whenever funds would allow. And yet I live in a purple district where I have not seen a strong enough voice to build a truly progressive coalition to work on bold change to income inequality and the imbalance in our economic system at a time when the middle class and working people cannot afford education, health care, housing and other basic needs; to address addiction and mental illness problems that are affecting so many in our community; to develop a workable transportation system that does not continue to harm public health and the environment; and to do a better job of protecting our environment and fighting climate change.

My three top legislative priorities are income inequality, behavioral health and climate change. Income inequality & economic development—We need to start by passing the Fair Share Amendment to fund education and transportation without increasing the tax burden on the middle class. We also need to close corporate tax loopholes, including the water's edge loophole. On the wage side, we need to increase enforcement of prevailing wage laws and independent contractor laws. I also see a strong connection between union membership and overall wages. We need to support unions in their efforts to organize new categories of workers to offset the growing concentration of capital that makes it more difficult for workers to bargain for fair wages.

Mental health & substance use—I want to aid in the fight for true parity and accessibility of mental health and substance abuse services. At a foundational level, we need more beds and services to ensure that those seeking help get into a program when they are most open to treatment. I would also like to fund innovative substance abuse and recovery programs to find additional evidence-based programs to increase available treatment options.

Climate change & coastal resilience—I would advocate to make progress on our environmental issues by dedicating a minimum of 1% of the state to environmental priorities and by moving toward 100% net zero emissions as quickly as possible. This will require investment in renewable energy, removing caps on net metering, improving energy efficiency, and a number of other measures to jumpstart the Green Economy. In addition, we need more resources devoted to environmental protection, particularly given the pullback by the federal government on protecting our wetlands and watersheds. As our region sees a rise in sea level and warming waters, we need to work on coastal resiliency planning that respects our watersheds and our estuaries and does not create more unintended consequences for our environment.

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

**BC:** I'm a mother, a wife, a daughter, an attorney, a small businessperson, a trained social worker, and a local elected official. I bring a breadth of experience to this position, beginning from my volunteer work as a child and continuing to my life today, combined with values rooted in social justice.

I began volunteering as a young person, serving food in a homeless shelter, organizing programs through Youth ARC, and tutoring Cambodian refugees. Growing up in Louisiana during a time of deep social divides, I learned to speak up against social injustice whenever I could. My sister came out in the early 1980s, and my social lens quickly extended to the harmful treatment of those who were lesbian or gay (which evolved to full support for the LGBTQ community).

I won a full scholarship to Loyola University of New Orleans, where I studied communications and served as editor-in-chief of the weekly newspaper. When our paper ran an in-depth package of stories against the death penalty, I stood up to the District Attorney of New Orleans when he tried to force us

to carry an opposing piece for the death penalty. I joined the College Democrats during the 1980s when Reagan was President, and marched with the Committee for Peace with Justice in Central America. I also spent time examining my relationship with religion, and found that I could not accept the Church's teachings on gender roles, birth control, abortion and sexual orientation. While embracing the importance of religion and spirituality, including my own Catholicism, I also recognized that religious tenets could be challenged and were not tenable in the legal or political sphere. The separation of church and state became core to my approach to politics.

I continued my education, and my community service, at New York University School of Law. As part of Law Women, working with Sanctuary for Families which serves battered women, I conducted intake services, coordinated court accompaniment, and helped women obtain orders of protection. We also organized buses to the March for Women's Lives in D.C. I worked on prison conditions and voter registration projects with the Civil Rights Clinic. As co-editor-in-chief of the Review of Law and Social Change, I oversaw publications and convenings. When I graduated in 1990, my academic record and service were recognized with honors including the law school's highest award for overall achievement.

After completing a judicial clerkship, I began my legal career at Morrison & Foerster, a firm known in part for its pro-bono work. In addition to litigating intellectual property and contract dispute cases, I implemented a project to represent battered women and collaborated with the ACLU Immigrant Rights Project. In 1993, I accepted the position of Counsel to PanAmSat, the world's first private international satellite operator. As I traveled to China, South America, South Africa, India and other areas to negotiate agreements, I had an inside view as the world's communication markets opened up and media became global. I worked on antitrust issues and business transactions that broke monopolistic strangleholds on the international flow of communications.

I moved to Massachusetts in 2001, and the next decade brought a series of personal and professional changes. I married Bob Coletta and we began trying to have a child. For some people that's a simple, or even accidental, achievement. For us, it took years of infertility treatment – reinforcing my commitment to reproductive rights and universal access to high quality care.

During the same period, I deepened my understanding of anti-poverty and social welfare programs by getting a Masters degree in Social Work from Bridgewater State. Having seen family members struggle with addiction and substance abuse, and having experienced the impact on all around them (including me), I sought to understand how our public systems can do more to address these problems with evidenced-based programs. My MSW studies, fieldwork with the Department of Social Services (now DCF) and MSPCC, and clinical work with MSPCC expanded my tools for helping individuals and solving problems. It also provided insight into the constraints faced by underfunded state agencies and community organizations.

All of these experiences pointed to the need for systemic change – which will not come without political change. I entered the political realm as a volunteer, joining the Hanson Democratic Town Committee in 2003. Using the expertise I had built in telecommunications, I chaired the Cable TV Advisory Committee and led the formation of the Whitman-Hanson Cable Access Corporation. In 2004, I won election to the Hanson Board of Selectmen, where I served until fertility-related health issues forced me to step away from politics until after my son Luca was born in 2007.

Our family moved to our home in Pembroke twelve years ago. Here, I re-entered the public sphere; I quickly joined the Pembroke Democratic Town Committee and worked on political campaigns. When Rep. Josh Cutler began his first campaign in 2010, I joined the team as his campaign treasurer. I was elected to the Pembroke Planning Board in 2014 and re-elected in 2019. I have served as the Chair of that board since 2018 and presided over passage of zoning changes that allow age-restricted cluster housing developments, preserving 50% open space and 10% of units as affordable housing, as well as adoption of a Housing Production Plan geared toward increasing affordable housing in Pembroke.

Like many parents, particularly mothers, I have faced hard decisions about how to balance career demands and parenthood. Luca's early health issues (which have now been resolved) and the cost of daycare made a full-time social work job infeasible. I forged a path that gave me more control over

my time with a law practice focusing on business, estate and real estate law, with clients including a well-known national consumer information non-profit, as well as many local businesses and families. I also established a real estate brokerage business. In addition to my local practice, I worked as counsel to a civil engineering company working on coastal restoration, drainage, water management and post-disaster recovery projects. My work with small businesses and my leadership positions in the South Shore Women's Business Network and the Realty Guild, have given me a strong sense of the economic vitality – and the challenges facing businesses – in our community.

What I have learned as an attorney and social worker is that we reach stronger solutions when we focus on the issues driving the positions rather than posturing over positions. I have spent much of my adult life as an attorney bringing together business parties in negotiating difficult and complicated agreements to reach resolution, knowing that, when the arguments were over, the parties would be starting rather than ending a business relationship.

As a member of town boards. I have seen what it takes to pass policy at the local level, having worked on many issues including passage of a cluster zoning bylaw, the development of the Whitman-Hanson Cable TV Access Corp., and the successful effort to pass an override for school funding in Pembroke.

The Cable Access Corp. was a prime example of a seemingly straightforward project needing to develop support and consensus to develop a program with two towns that have difficulty with a regional school system. We brought together people most likely to oppose and those most likely to support the project and worked through everyone's concerns to develop a program that has served both towns well.

If elected, I will bring 30 years of legal practice, social work, advocacy, and political activism to bear for the Plymouth & Barnstable district.

***3. What do you view as the biggest obstacles to passing progressive policy at the state level?***

**BC:** I see the biggest obstacle as compromising from the middle. We need stronger voices to lead on progressive issues and not simply accept incremental change. With a Republican governor leading the messaging, we are not reaching enough people with an understanding of why they would be better off with progressive policies. Electing a progressive such as me in this district would strengthen the argument that progressive solutions are supported by the voters in this state.

I also believe government and stakeholders remain too separated in silos. We need to bring stakeholders together formally and informally to develop policies and bridge gaps in understanding.

## **II. The Issues**

### **A. Revenue and Taxation**

*Between 1977 and 2016, Massachusetts [reduced state taxes](#) by more than all but two other states. Because of income tax cuts enacted between 1998 and 2002, Massachusetts loses over \$4 billion in tax revenue each year--\$4 billion that is not invested in our roads, bridges, schools, parks, and services, all of which have historically been part of why MA is a great place to live. 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--and willingness--to pass new and visionary legislation, as there is a continual shortage of funds for existing priorities.*

- 1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** Income inequality and regressive taxation have been at the top of the issues that I have raised since I entered the race in October.

Prior to entering this race, I have worked by supporting candidates, such as Rep. Josh Cutler, serving on his campaign since he first ran for office in 2010. I have donated money, held coffees, and worked on Democratic town committees to elect the most progressive candidates possible in our district. Working on local issues has also given me a greater understanding of the conflicts created by our overreliance on property taxes and a flat income tax rate in Massachusetts. I see the divide at town meetings as middle class and lower income members of our community have little left to give to support our schools, police, fire and community services.

I have also spoken frequently on social media about the need to address wage inequality, to address imbalances in our economic system and to create fairer systems of taxation. Although I appreciate the challenges of using social media for political messages, I feel strongly that this is a media space that cannot be ceded to those who use the space to spread untrue information.

- 2. Corporate Tax Breaks. Corporate tax breaks cost Massachusetts [more than \\$1 billion in foregone revenue](#). Companies can secure access to such tax breaks due to political connections whether or not the promised benefits ever materialize. Which of the following accountability steps would you support?**
  - Collecting and publicly disclosing information about the benefits to the state from any tax break?
  - Repealing any tax break that does not provide the intended benefits in a cost-effective manner?
  - Establishing sunset dates for all tax breaks so that they must come up for periodic review?

**BC:** Transparency and review are the keys to demonstrating whether specific tax breaks produce the hoped for benefits.

- 3. Fair Share. Would you support 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”)?

**BC:** YES.

This has been a cornerstone of my campaign. We know that we need work on transportation (and its impact on climate change) and education (especially higher education at this point), but the middle class cannot be expected to pay more. They already pay more than their fair share, and this amendment provides one path for rebalancing the tax burdens in a more progressive and fair manner.

**4. Progressive Revenue. Massachusetts will not see new revenue from the Fair Share Amendment until 2023, but we have unmet needs now (and will still even with the Fair Share Amendment). Which policies would you support to make a more progressive tax code?**

- a. Raising the corporate minimum tax for larger companies? (The corporate minimum tax is currently only \$456)
- b. Imposing a tax on the portion of corporations’ US profits that are shifted to offshore tax havens?
- c. Raising the corporate tax rate from 8% to 9.5% (where it stood in 2009)?
- d. Raising the tax on long-term capital gains from 5% to 8.95%, in line with states like New York and Vermont?
- e. Levying a modest tax on university endowments greater than \$1 billion?

**BC:** My only concern with the long-term capital gains rate is whether it would impact families with limited resources. I would like to see any increase in capital gains rates tied to income and/or wealth levels that seek to restore balance to our tax system that is increasingly regressive.

**B. Jobs and the Economy**

*Massachusetts ranks as one of the top ten [most unequal states](#), as the gains from economic growth have disproportionately benefited the already well-off. Compounding this, we are one of the most expensive states in the country for [health care](#), [housing](#), and [child care](#), all of which strain wages. A strong economy depends on strong wages, as workers spend and help local economies thrive. Although the recently passed minimum wage increase will eventually lift the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, this is [still not a living wage](#) for many.*

*In recent decades, unions have been under attack. However, unions played -- and continue to play -- a pivotal role in creating a strong middle class. With weaker unions (or no unions at all) come weaker social and economic rights and an imbalanced economy.*

**1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** I grew up in a state where right to work became “right to work for peanuts”. I long ago came to the conclusion that union membership correlates to rises in overall growth. My position is that we need to strengthen unions, fight against wage theft and re-balance our taxation system to be less reliant on more regressive taxes. I have also looked at this from a perspective of the evisceration of antitrust law which has led to greater concentrations of capital and greater influence of corporations on our political system. As we see greater concentrations of capital, the need for strong organization of workers through unions is more

important than ever.

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

BC: YES.

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

BC: YES.

Corporations should not be allowed to structure businesses in a way that shirks their responsibility to make sure that everyone who works on a project is paid fairly.

4. **Overtime**. Would you support updating MA's state overtime law to restore overtime pay protections to low- and moderate-income salaried workers when they work more than 40 hours a week?

BC: YES.

5. **Fair Scheduling**. Many workers in the service sector face irregular working hours, making it difficult to plan for other life events. Do you support providing workers the right to 14 days advance notice of hours and the right to request specific hours without retaliation from the employer?

BC: YES.

I would only want to look at the impact of these rules on small businesses who may have limited numbers of employees to cover shifts.

6. **Unions**. Since the 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?

BC: YES.

I believe that helping the middle class with more progressive tax policies and better funding of higher education, development of more affordable housing and access to health care would reduce some of the current fight by the middle class against unions.

7. **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?

BC: YES.

As an attorney, I have seen how difficult it is for employees to sue companies and enforce their rights.

## 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. Although our public education system gets high marks overall, it remains one of the [most unequal](#) in the country. Powerful corporate interests are promoting false solutions and working to undermine public schools, teachers, and unions. These groups invest 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. Costly, mandated standardized test results are used to label schools as "failing" and justify these privatization schemes.*

*Most of the [fastest-growing occupations](#) require education beyond a high school diploma, but Massachusetts has been disinvesting from public higher education for the past two decades. This has led to higher tuition costs, putting students at risk of long-term debt or making higher education out of reach for them entirely.*

- 1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** I have publicly expressed my support for the Cherish Act and fully funding public education. Neither of my parents were able to complete their college education, and they ensured that their children who wanted to go to college were able to achieve advanced degrees. We need to make sure that educational opportunities continue to exist for all people, without regard to family circumstances.

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

**BC:** YES.

Supporting children from a young age provides the greatest promise that all will have the same opportunities.

- 3. Equitable Funding. In 2019, Massachusetts updated its 25-year-old education funding formula and committed to \$1.5 billion more in investment in public schools. How will you make sure the state follows through with this promise?**

**BC:** First we need to honor the commitment that these dollars will be a budget priority, even during any periods of economic downturns. Second, we need to pass the Fair Share Amendment and close corporate tax loopholes to make sure that the state collects sufficient revenue to make good on these promises.

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

**BC:** YES.

- 5. Charter Schools. In 2016, MA 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 school districts.**

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

**BC:** YES.

I have seen systems that move money to alternate school systems, and the primary public schools suffer. We cannot allow that to happen. Massachusetts has some of the best public



schools in the country and we cannot allow our public schools to be diluted with funding shifting to charter schools.

- b. Would you support legislation to bring greater accountability to charter schools by requiring them to adhere to the same disclosure and disciplinary standards as public school districts?**

**BC:** YES.

6. **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 includes the effective use of contraception?**

**BC:** YES.

7. **Higher Education Access. Do you support granting in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students?**

**BC:** YES.

Students who have graduated from Massachusetts high schools and are ready to contribute to our society should be given the opportunity to do so. Meanwhile, I would continue to press our federal government to resolve immigration issues through comprehensive reform.

8. **Debt-Free College. Do you support making tuition (and mandatory curriculum fees) free at public colleges and universities?**

**BC:** YES.

We need to find a way to do this. Anyone who has the ability to attend college should be able to do so without incurring tens of thousands of dollars in debt.

#### **D. Health Care**

*Massachusetts has led the way in providing near universal health insurance coverage, with [97% of the state](#) having health insurance. But until that is 100%, we haven't reached truly universal coverage or tackled critical barriers to accessing care. Disparities in insurance coverage and health care access continue to exist along income, racial, and education lines. Premiums continue to rise, and high deductibles mean that many do not get the health care they need -- or suffer from long-lasting debt if they do. We still spend an oversized portion of public and private money on health care, but without necessarily achieving better health outcomes.*

- 1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** Since I studied single payer systems in my MSW program, I saw that a single payer system is most likely to deliver better health outcomes at a much lower cost overall. The efficiencies of a single payer system would reduce the burden on consumers, as well as the burdens on the health care system. When my son was born he had health problems, and I recall walking into Children's Hospital for gratitude for our health insurance and wondering with pain how others without health insurance (or quality health insurance) could cope with childhood illnesses. I also grew up with a mom with lupus, knowing that she had to give up a

job typing at home to work for a company that provided health insurance that could cover her pre-existing condition. I also knew that her condition could have plunged us into financial trouble. Single payer health insurance is most likely to provide universal coverage at a cost that our country as a whole can afford.

2. **Single Payer. Do you support enacting a single payer health care system in Massachusetts, which would guarantee health insurance as a right?**

**BC:** YES.

While I support this, I do believe it is a challenge to produce the same efficiencies that a federal single payer system would achieve.

3. **Reproductive Rights. In Massachusetts, women under eighteen seeking an abortion must obtain parental consent or judicial authorization. This can lead to young women going out of state, or risking their lives and health with illegal or self-induced abortion. Would you support repealing this restriction?**

**BC:** YES.

We need to trust that young women can make a decision about their bodies and their lives better than a judge can do. In most cases, young women do turn to their parents, and we also need to trust that a young woman may have a reason for not turning to their parents and could be at risk for emotional or physical harm if required to seek parental consent.

4. **Harm Reduction. 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?**

**BC:** YES.

Outcomes of SCSs demonstrate that they save lives. As someone who has been involved with addiction issues, I believe that our first goal should be to keep people alive and then to connect them to treatment programs and services.

## **E. Housing**

*Massachusetts has a lot to offer, but that does little if people can't afford to live here. The [US News & World Report's annual state rankings](#) put Massachusetts at #41 in housing affordability (and #43 in cost of living). A worker earning minimum wage in Massachusetts would have to work [91 hours a week](#) to afford a modest one-bedroom rental home at market rate (and 113 hours for a modest two-bedroom). 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. 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.*

1. **Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** I fundamentally believe that wages should allow someone to afford a place to live. I would work to increase the supply of affordable and low-income housing in this state. As a member of the Planning Board, when we recently passed a cluster zoning bylaw, we included a requirement of 10% affordable housing. We are working to go beyond this with a Housing

Production Plan that we also approved in the last year. As a realtor, I see that housing prices are unaffordable and see increased supply as the best hope for creating affordable housing. But I also see that affordable units are not affordable for all. The salary cap for affordable units in our area is about \$80,000 for a family of three. That is well beyond what many earn in our area. We need to create housing that is affordable for those making \$30,000 a year or less.

2. **Funding. Would you support legislation that would allow cities and towns to impose a fee on real estate transfers to generate revenue for affordable housing, with the ability to create local exemptions as appropriate?**

**BC:** YES.

The key is to make this a local option. Not all communities can bear this tax without making housing less affordable by raising the costs of closing a real estate transaction.

3. **Tenant Protections. Do you support passing enabling legislation to provide municipalities with the authority to implement rent-stabilizing regulations, just cause eviction protections, stronger condominium conversion and foreclosure protections, anti-displacement zones, and options to help tenants manage the upfront costs of leasing an apartment?**

**BC:** YES.

I support this in principle, but see it as less likely to be enacted in my senatorial district.

4. **Zoning Reform/Housing Production. Do you support requiring cities and towns to allow multifamily housing to be built as of right within 1 mile of transit stations?**

**BC:** YES.

I would require that towns have some control over the size of lots being used and the density of the housing. I would like to see more housing that is walkable to public transportation.

5. **Eviction Sealing. Today, when a tenant exercises their legal rights in housing court, it creates a permanent record. Eviction records create lasting stigma, are error prone and impair access to stable housing. Would you support legislation to seal eviction records so that both tenant and landlord could move on with their lives after three years?**

**BC:** YES.

Three years seems to be a reasonable amount of time to re-establish a rental history.

## 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.*

*Mass incarceration in Massachusetts has proven socially and economically destructive, breaking apart communities across the state. From 2011 to 2016, [spending on prisons](#) grew faster than any other part of the Massachusetts budget, while funding for necessary services languished. The average cost per year to house an inmate in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections is [more than \\$60,000](#), money that could be better reinvested into the communities that have suffered from decades of misguided and racially discriminatory "tough on crime" policies. To achieve "justice for all," we need a judicial system that does not disproportionately target communities of color and the poor and that does not criminalize public health issues such as addiction. The April 2018 criminal justice reform bill makes strides forward, but there is more work to do.*

*Immigrants make up 16% of Massachusetts's population; however, demagoguery against, or indifference to, immigrant populations has historically been a mainstay of Massachusetts politics. As the Trump administration in Washington ramps up a xenophobic mass deportation agenda, it is important for states like Massachusetts to take leadership in protecting and advancing the rights of our immigrant communities and making clear that all are welcome.*

- 1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** Racial justice in prosecution and sentencing is foundational to a racially just society. As a co-editor of the Review of Law & Social Change, we convened a death penalty symposium with a strong racial justice component. In the Civil Rights Clinic, I spent time working in prisons and understanding the challenges of incarceration. I saw firsthand how some people were able to grow even in harsh prison settings. In the MSW program, we further examined policies of incarceration and re-entry programs. Our criminal justice system is one of the most complicated areas where unaddressed mental illness, substance abuse, trauma, racism and similar problems come together. We need to do a better job of treating the underlying causes of much criminal activity instead of simply punishing crimes more and more harshly.

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

**BC:** YES.

I respect police officers. I believe that we hold anyone who shoots a police officer accountable for that action. Conversely, we need to ensure that police shootings are reviewed independently. In the end, I believe this also helps build trust of a community in their police force.

- 3. Sentencing Reform. The 2018 criminal justice reform bill was an important first step in reducing mass incarceration. However, in our "liberal" state, incarceration rates remain much higher than they are in other countries, and sentencing laws can be even more punitive than those in states viewed as conservative. Which of the following reforms would you support?**

- Eliminating mandatory minimums for opioid-related offenses?
- Raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21, in line with research that shows that young offenders served by a juvenile system are much less likely to reoffend and more likely to successfully transition to adulthood?
- Decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adolescents, by creating an

- exception to the statutory rape law for youth close in age?
- d. Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application?

**BC:** My hesitation with life without parole is that there are some crimes that are dangerous and complicated enough that life without parole may be a reasonable alternative to the death penalty. In the case of miscarriages of justice, pardons and commuting sentences provides a safety valve so long as the person incarcerated remains alive.

4. **Solitary Confinement. In Massachusetts, prisoners can be sentenced to 10 years of solitary confinement—per infraction. The UN defines holding someone in solitary confinement for more than 15 days as torture. Do you support limiting the use of solitary to no more than 15 consecutive days?**

**BC:** YES.

5. **Prison Visitation. Maintaining connections with friends and family outside prisons is one of the most important factors in ensuring successful reentry. In March of 2018, the DOC severely limited the ability of prisoners to receive visits and the rights of family and friends to visit their loved ones in prison. ([Read more on this here.](#)) Do you favor ending the restrictions placed on visitation and reverting back to the DOC visitation regulations that were in place prior to March of 2018?**

**BC:** YES.

6. **Prison Profiteering. While Massachusetts does not have private prisons, the DOC invites private companies to profit off of the families of prisoners by price gouging inmates who have no alternatives but to buy from the sole providers of goods in prisons. Do support ending the price gouging of inmates for necessary items and requiring DOC to adequately supply inmates with the basic requirements necessary for life to keep in contact with their families and maintain good health and hygiene?**

**BC:** YES.

7. **Safe Communities Act. Do you support the Safe Communities Act, which limits local and state police collaboration with federal immigration agents, bars law enforcement and court personnel from inquiring about immigration status, and ensures due process protections?**

**BC:** YES.

8. **Work and Family Mobility Act. Do you support removing immigration status as a barrier to applying for a license or learner's permit?**

**BC:** YES.

Studies have shown that driver's licenses increase safety on the roads.

## **G. Good Government and Strong Democracy**

*A strong democracy depends on a transparent and representative government and an engaged public. Too often, however, we see centralized, unaccountable power and barriers to participation. An undemocratic, centralized power structure on Beacon Hill makes it easier for lobbyists to target the top and undermine the system. Despite recent reforms, a weak public records system stymies government accountability: MA is one of only two states where all three branches of state government*

*claim to be exempt. A strong democracy requires an engaged electorate, but voter turnout in midterm elections, and especially local elections, remains low. Although election modernization legislation in 2014 and 2018 helped brought much-needed reforms, we still lag behind states in New England and around the country in making voting accessible (Maine, for instance, has allowed for Election Day Registration since the 1970s).*

*A centralized power system, a skewed campaign finance system, and restrictive voting laws together help create a situation in which our elections are the [least competitive in the country](#).*

- 1. Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** I have supported candidates such as President Obama and women running for office. For President Obama, I travelled to Philadelphia in 2008 when they called for attorneys to monitor polling stations to prevent disenfranchisement of voters. Now I am stepping up to run for office myself in an effort to increase the number of women in the state legislature.

- 2. Public Records Law. Massachusetts is one of only two states where the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Judiciary claim full exemption from the public records laws. Would you support eliminating this exemption?**

**BC:** YES.

- 3. Legislative Transparency -- Part I. The Massachusetts Legislature lacks many basic transparency measures found in other state legislatures around the country. Would you support making the following items available online...?**

- All committee votes, whether taken by electronic poll or formal roll call?
- All written testimony submitted for or against bills?
- Reader-friendly summaries of bills currently in or reported out of committee?

- 4. Legislative Transparency -- Part II. Legislators only vote to change the rules at the start of the legislative session, but all legislators can model transparency on their own throughout the session. Would you commit to doing the following...?**

- Standing for a recorded vote when a colleague asks for one on any amendment which you have co-sponsored?
- Making your committee votes available online on your website?

**BC:** In this campaign, I am already working for transparency by releasing several questionnaires. Voters may not agree with my position on every issue, but they will know where I stand and that I am willing to continue the conversation about any issue.

- 5. State House Culture. Do you support the creation an independent commission to investigate and report on complaints of workplace and sexual harassment in the Massachusetts Legislature?**

**BC:** YES.

- 6. Public Campaign Financing. Our campaign finance system favors incumbency and discriminates against potential candidates who do not have a ready pool of wealthy donors. Do you support the creation of a robust public financing system for state elections?**

**BC:** YES.

This would be one step toward reducing the impact of the growing concentration of wealth on

our electoral process.

7. **Removing Barriers to Running. 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 child care?**

**BC:** YES.

Women are still more impacted by child care policies. When we look at the gender imbalance in the legislature, we must look for ways to make public office more accessible to parents.

8. **Voting Access. Which of the following policies to increase voter participation do you support?**
- a. Election Day Registration?
  - b. The expansion of early voting to municipal elections and primaries?
  - c. No-fault absentee voting (early voting without penalty)?

9. **Ranked Choice Voting. Do you support the 2020 ballot initiative to adopt ranked choice voting for state, county, and (non-presidential) federal elections?**

**BC:** YES.

10. **Election Integrity. Do you support requiring [risk-limiting audits](#) of election results, in which a statistically significant percentage of ballots are hand counted to ensure that the reported winner was the actual winner, preserving the integrity of elections from from foreign interference, technological glitches, or simple human error?**

**BC:** YES.

## **H. Sustainable Infrastructure and Environmental Protection**

*As a coastal state, Massachusetts will be hit particularly hard by climate change, but we are not responding with the necessary urgency. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions need to be [halved by 2030](#) and brought to net zero by 2050. 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.*

*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 billion](#), and it would need [more than \\$10 billion](#) to bring infrastructure and equipment up to a state of good repair. Regional Transit Authorities that serve communities, including Gateway Cities across the state, face enormous capital needs as well.*

1. **Please explain your principles and proposals as relate to this issue, and what work you personally have done to advance them (legislation, community work, published writings, etc.).**

**BC:** Climate change can no longer be an issue to be addressed one day. We must recognize the crisis and take bold action now. In MA, the transportation congestion is costing us economically and from a public health perspective. I support carbon pricing to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and generate revenues to increase a green infrastructure. We also need to begin to grapple with coastal resiliency. And allocate more of our budget to environmental policies overall.

2. **Waste Reduction. Would you support a statewide ban on single-use shopping bags and a requirement that alternatives be more sustainable?**

**BC:** YES.

Our town meeting passed a shopping bag ban, but a statewide ban would be much more effective.

3. **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?**

**BC:** YES.

Looking at the slowdown in solar power installations in the last two years, I have concluded that we need to move quickly to stimulate more solar production.

4. **Renewable Energy. Do you support a target of 100% renewable energy economy-wide by 2045 and 100% renewable electricity by 2035?**

**BC:** YES.

We need to ensure that we push for energy efficiency as well as increasing renewable energy production.

5. **Environmental Justice. Successive 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. Would you support efforts to codify EJ into law?**

**BC:** YES.

6. **Fossil Fuel Infrastructure. Do you oppose the expansion of gas pipelines in the state?**

**BC:** YES.

7. **Carbon Pricing. Do you support imposing a fee on carbon emissions and using some of the revenue to invest in green infrastructure, especially in frontline communities?**

**BC:** YES.

I have publicly announced my support for carbon pricing in this campaign.

8. **Public Transportation. Will you oppose any fare increases to the MBTA or regional**



**transit authorities and work toward the goal of fare-free public transit?**

**BC:** YES.

I see real promise in fare-free efforts to increase reliance on public transportation. The loss of fares would be offset by reduced environmental impacts from our dependence upon cars.

9. **Regional Transportation Funding. The unavailability of state funds for infrastructure spending has meant the deterioration of regional transportation systems. Do you support allowing municipalities to place a question on the ballot to raise revenue for local and regional transportation projects?**

**BC:** YES.

I would also like to see greater public funding of regional transportation, which I see as critical to lessening our dependence on cars.

**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.

**BC:** Income inequality remains my number one issue because when people are insecure they aren't thinking about tomorrow. I find that many deny or refuse to consider climate change because they are overwhelmed by trying to put together housing, food, health care and education. I understand that climate change is basic—about survival of the planet as we know it—but for many in our communities, climate change can take a backseat to decisions around how basic needs are met. When our economic system is out of balance, with increasingly large concentrations of wealth, we have a more difficult time making progress on social justice or climate change issues. I will press for progress on all fronts, but will keep income inequality at the forefront of the conversation.