



**PROGRESSIVE MASSACHUSETTS
2020 LEGISLATIVE
ENDORSEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Candidate: John Mahoney

Office Sought: Plymouth & Barnstable (Senate)

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I. About You

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

Sustainable Environment & Water Security

Infrastructure

Education

Opioids

2. What prepares you to serve in this capacity?

I have served in town government for over 20 years on committees and elected positions. 12 of these years has been spent on the Plymouth Selectboard where I serve as the Vice Chair and the Selectboard liaison to numerous committees including the Nuclear Matters and Nuclear Decommissioning Citizens Advisory Committee. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Business from Bridgewater State and have been a proud member of the International Elevator Constructors Local 4 for over 20 years. I understand and have faced many of the issues our working class families face - either personally or during my time on the Selectboard. I believe that with my education, life experience, public experience, and commitment to serving in a transparent fashion prepares me to represent the Plymouth and Barnstable District in the Massachusetts State Senate.

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

We currently have a culture on Beacon Hill that in certain capacities keeping your head down and following the crowd is the way. I pride myself in not being a politician, but being a community member and advocate, not concerned with re-election but focused on the issues the commonwealth faces. We need Representatives and Senators that are going to take a stand for what is right, for what will push the commonwealth to continue being the trailblazer it's been known for. Additionally, we need to find new unique ways to fund initiatives and programs that lift our communities up. Saying the funds do not exist is false. We can and will find the proper avenues to do this without putting it on the backs of working families.

II. The Issues

Our questionnaire is focused on the issues outlined in our [Progressive Platform](#), which also inform our [Legislative Agenda](#). We are interested in your overall philosophy as well as your views on specific policy and legislation.

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.).**

JM: The perpetual cycle of municipal government to leverage additional taxes through property taxes and other forms of the current regressive structure has been something that has bothered me for a long time. During my time on the Selectboard I have looked at new ways to fund the needs of my community. From opposing property tax increases in favor of using the already existing roads tax for road repair, to earmarking our current meals tax to leverage Plymouth's large tourist economy to create the first Town Hall in Plymouth's history. I plan to continue to look for innovative ways to continue making progress.

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?**
 - a. Collecting and publicly disclosing information about the benefits to the state from any tax break?
 - b. Repealing any tax break that does not provide the intended benefits in a cost-effective manner?
 - c. Establishing sunset dates for all tax breaks so that they must come up for periodic review?
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")?**

JM: YES.

When this amendment first came to light, I was a supporter from the start. Ensuring that these funds would be allocated for immediate needs and not left to fall into the general fund

was important to me personally.

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?

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.).

JM: I am a proud union member, fighting for fair wages, against wage theft, and good benefits is mandatory for our workers. I have walked picket lines and advocated for benefits for municipal employees during my time on the Selectboard.

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

JM: YES.

All workers deserve a living wage.

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?

JM: YES.

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?

JM: YES.

I ran for State Representative in Plymouth against an incumbent who supported this legislation; it was a motivator during that race just like it is now.

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?**

JM: YES.

Work-life balance is extremely important to self-care and a person's well-being. It is also extremely important for those that struggle with the cost of childcare or rely on public transportation

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?**

JM: YES.

I am a member of IUEC Local 4 and have seen first-hand how collective bargaining benefits and protects its workers.

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?**

JM: YES.

C. Education

The promise of public education has always been as a gateway to opportunity and mobility for all, regardless of economic circumstances, a cornerstone of the American dream for all residents. 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.).**

JM:

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

JM: YES.

Studies have shown that the earlier a child gets into school, the more likely they are to succeed during their educational journey.

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?**

JM: This bill was needed to ensure our schools are adequately funded so teachers have the resources needed to provide quality education. My parents were MTA members, so this bill is close to my heart. This funding is a top priority for me, I will work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure we have funding solutions for this bill just as I did with the roads and Town Hall here in Plymouth.

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.)**

JM: 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?**

JM: YES.

- 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?**

JM: 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?**

JM: YES.

I support age-appropriate sexual health education.

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

JM: YES.

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

JM: YES.

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.).**

JM: When it comes to benefits and health insurance, I have always been supportive of initiatives that provide comprehensive coverage at affordable rates. I have worked closely with municipal unions during their collective bargaining to ensure that this can be done. However, there is much needed reform in Healthcare and insurance. To many are going without due to cost causing a dangerous situation that no one should ever have to be in. You should not have to compromise your health for financial stability.

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

JM: YES.

- 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?**

JM: When this was first brought to my attention, I was at first hesitant. After having a long discussion about it with individuals who are involved. I do support this legislation. These barriers can lead to unsafe practices and masked abuse in these young women's lives

- 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?**

JM: These sites have been a topic of discussion for many years and seeing the opioid epidemic disproportionately effect those who work physically demanding jobs, this issue has my attention. I have seen through the research that shows that these facilities can decrease the spread infection and overdoses while increasing the number of individuals who seek to engage in services that can help them get better. I am not in opposition of this but do believe there is still more research needed to ensure proper safety and implementation.

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.).**

JM: In town I have been a proponent of using existing structure to promote affordable housing. Additionally, I have been supportive of affordable housing being increased in our community. However, what is deemed as affordable in certain parts of the Commonwealth is anything but. There is a need to address the availability and costliness of the cost of living to provide a sustainable foundation for our communities

- 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?**

JM: YES.

- 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?**

JM: YES.

- 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?**

JM: YES.

- 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?**

JM: 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.

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.).**

JM: I am firmly against mandatory minimums and extended solitary confinement. These policies completely contradict the “rehabilitation” aspect of our correctional facilities. We need to start taking a stance that is more rehabilitative with increased community supports to ensure that those who are at-risk can seek the resources to succeed.

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

JM: YES.

- 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?
- Eliminating the sentence of life without parole, which is costly and has been shown to be racist in its application?

JM: On (c): With the age gap of two years and the specifications in place this legislation, I do support it.

- 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?

JM: 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?

JM: 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?

JM: 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?

JM: YES.

This legislation helps ensure that our community based officers are being able to continue doing their assigned duty effectively without being deputized to pursue federal objectives.

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

JM: YES.

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.).**

JM:

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?**

JM: 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...?**

- a. All committee votes, whether taken by electronic poll or formal roll call?
- b. All written testimony submitted for or against bills?
- c. 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...?**

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

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?**

JM: YES.

The reported of the use of nondisclosure agreements and lack of investigation over the years is disheartening.

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?**

JM: YES.

Challengers create a discussion and debate about our issues. It needed to ensure that our government is working for the people rather than the status quo.

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?**

JM: YES.

As a full-time worker, campaigner, and town official I know how hard it is to meet your objectives when running for public office. The idea of Public Service is inclusion and shouldn't be left to those who can self-finance or afford necessities like childcare.

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?

JM: 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?

JM: 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.).**

JM: Within the Town of Plymouth, I have been an environmental advocate. I have pushed for the Holmes Dam removal to remove barriers to our migrating fish populations, removed dilapidated homes that have failing septic infrastructure from our fragile coastline, and created a stand-alone marine and environmental department aimed with an additional budget for strategic investment in water. This budget has been created by earmarking a portion of the revenue the renewable energy pilots generate.

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

JM: YES.

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?

JM: YES.

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

JM: YES.

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?

JM: YES.

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

JM: 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?

JM: YES.

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?

JM: YES.

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?

JM: YES.

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.