



## PMWNC Candidate Questionnaire – Norfolk County District Attorney

### 1. What motivated you to run for District Attorney? Please include details such as unique qualifications you bring to the table and/or personal experiences that influenced your decision to run.

I decided to run for District Attorney because I am a change agent and change is desperately needed in the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office: change in the culture of law enforcement, in policies, and in approach. Norfolk County deserves more professionalism, more transparency, and less embarrassment. The messages exchanged between the two lead investigators in the death of John O'Keefe are disturbing and very concerning. Norfolk County needs a District Attorney who will handle the fallout and build a new culture of integrity, not intolerance.

I get this from my mother. During the busing crisis in Boston in the 1970's, no one in power gave much thought to the experience of Chinese children being bused into hostile neighborhoods from Chinatown. My mother led other mothers in Chinatown to demand that we were kept safe on those bus trips. She was a champion for us. She taught us the importance of protecting people in vulnerable communities and not accepting the status quo as the final answer.

As a professional, I have twice been promoted to positions of leadership when a major change was needed. When I was made the Chief of Narcotics in Suffolk County in 2010, the unit was focused on prosecuting street-level drug dealers who were often using drugs themselves. I was put in charge to focus on high-level drug traffickers utilizing the state wiretap statute. Instead of always prosecuting lower-level dealers, we found ways to get them addiction treatment. As a result of these changes, we had the largest seizure of fentanyl in New England.

At MassHealth, I was promoted to be the Director of the Office of Medicaid Board of Hearings after the agency was sued. The Board of hearings was months behind in issuing decisions and scheduling hearings. Responses to public records requests were untimely. On my watch, we began posting every decision on the MassHealth website, with names redacted of course. We decide 30,000 appeals a year, and I review every case. I supervise a staff of 60. No one else in the race has my leadership and managerial experience.

I understand why we need change and I am prepared to get started on Day One.

### 2. If elected, what would be your top three priorities as DA?

In my first year as District Attorney, my top three prosecutorial priorities are:

1. Creating a conviction integrity unit whose sole purpose is to review convictions for civil rights violations. This unit's first order of business will be to review every case that involved Michael Proctor and Sean Goode to determine whether there was falsified evidence by Proctor and Goode due to their personal biases against women, BIPOC, Jews, and Muslims.

In 2012, when District Attorney's Offices in Suffolk, Middlesex, and Norfolk discovered that Annie Dookhan, a chemist at the Hinton Drug Laboratory, "dry-labbed," contaminated and falsified drug evidence. Dookhan's actions compromised 20,000 to 30,000 criminal cases, which ultimately led the SJC to vacate tens of thousands of convictions tied to her lab work. At the time while I was Chief of Narcotics in Suffolk County and I was in the frontline of managing this crisis. I had to dismiss many drug cases against people who were guilty due to Ms. Dookhan's misconduct. But people cannot be convicted with tampered evidence. Norfolk DA's office is facing the same problem because of recently released vile emails between Proctor and Goode. My conviction integrity unit will consist of experienced prosecutors from outside of Norfolk County who will review every case to determine whether the constitutional rights of defendants were infringed based on Proctor and Goode's personal biases and potential discriminatory practices. Beyond the Proctor and Goode matters, I believe that the District Attorney has an ongoing obligation to review convictions for violations of constitutional rights, and to act when a defendant's rights have been violated.

2. Overhauling the current and longstanding culture of law enforcement by sending a clear message that personal biases have no place in public safety. This includes misogynistic, antisemitic, racial biases, amongst many. Police officers, prosecutors, and investigators who hold such views should not be entrusted with public safety. The residents of Norfolk County deserve new leadership, who will ensure that they are protected from unlawful police misconduct and discriminatory behavior.
3. Remove cultural and language barriers so that Norfolk County's immigrant community learns to trust law enforcement agencies and feels safe reporting crimes. This will also provide the immigrant community some safeguard measures against unconstitutional ICE actions by educating them about their rights.

My priorities will likely evolve after my first or second year as public safety issues arise.

3. How would you ensure transparency, accountability, adherence to ethical standards, and resistance to political influence in the DA's office? Please consider factors such as staff recruitment/training/ retention, use of technology/data, and handling cases of police misconduct or allegations of wrongful convictions.

First, I would ensure that my administration consists of very experienced attorneys, many of whom are former prosecutors at the Suffolk District Attorney's Office whose work I know and trust to be grounded in the facts, the law, and professional ethics. Second, I also want to include defense attorneys in my administration who can offer an informed perspective on fairness to offenders and not just punishment. I believe it is important to focus on the root cause of crime and deter re-offending. I would ensure that all staff are regularly trained on new case law, enhanced investigation techniques, such as trauma informed investigation and prosecution for sexual assault crimes and avoiding bias in investigation or prosecution.

As the Director of the Office of Medicaid Board of Hearings, I lead by practicing transparency, accountability, and integrity every day. I hold my team to high standards and they meet them. Since becoming the Director, all our decisions have been redacted and posted on the MassHealth website, thereby significantly reducing FOIA requests. I created a unit where calls are answered by a live person to alleviate the caller's stress and to provide immediate answers to questions. I have completely overhauled the agency so that there is organization and supervisory oversight on every level. All administrative law judges have been trained and certified to be mediators. The Norfolk County District Attorney's Office has not been forthcoming and transparent with the public, and I am committed to changing that on Day One.

Finally, I would insist that my staff at the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office fully adhere to ethical standards and avoid any appearance of impropriety. Unlike other candidates, I did not pursue or accept endorsements from the Norfolk County law enforcement agencies and unions with whom I will work and manage. I also did not pursue or accept endorsements and/or campaign contributions from families of crime victims and those who were previously prosecuted by the Norfolk County District Attorney's Office. I believe that accepting such endorsements and donations pose a conflict of interest and raises serious concerns about whether one can remain unbiased when faced with police misconduct and continuing an investigation of previously charged defendants.

4. What steps would you take to engage with marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by crime and prosecution?

Unfortunately, we have plenty of data showing us that Black and Latino defendants in Norfolk County are more likely to be arrested than their white counterparts and 5 times as likely to be detained pretrial. Those are issues I would want to address immediately by not setting bail for non-violent offenders, barring extenuating circumstances.

The national climate has made immigrants more hesitant to reach out to law enforcement when they need us. The recent news stories about two Norfolk County investigators also have a chilling effect. I would want to meet with the leaders of immigrant communities, communities of color, LGBTQIA+ groups, and Jewish groups who make up our neighbors in Norfolk County. I want to hear their concerns about safety and about due process. I will have an open door for community concerns.

As a Chinese American woman, I am aware of the disparate treatment and racism marginalized groups experience in Norfolk County and in the criminal justice system generally. If I am elected, I would commit myself and key members of my administration to building relationships with all members of the Norfolk County community, making specific efforts to reach out to marginalized communities to hear their perspective on criminal justice, find out where the pain points are for them, and ensure that me and my team remain approachable and responsive to their concerns. This will not involve just one or two meetings, but sustained communication. It is of utmost importance to me that regardless of race, color, or immigration status that all Norfolk County residents feel safe reporting crime and feel they have been treated fairly. I am committed to being a District Attorney for everyone.

5. How would you approach cases involving individuals who suffer from substance abuse disorder, have mental health issues, or are unhoused?

My approach would depend on the facts of each individual case and the offender's background. If the case involves a non-violent offense, housing is a priority and then treatment, employment, and sustained community support as appropriate

6. What is your stance on prosecuting low-level, nonviolent offenses such as drug possession?

I have a proven record of not prosecuting low-level nonviolent offenses such as drug possession. When I was the Chief of the Narcotics Unit in Suffolk County, these cases were always diverted to specialty courts so that any addiction issues can be managed and treated. Such cases were nolle prosequi after successful treatment and proper continuing supports. On countless occasions, I have contacted inpatient

facilities to find beds for users who were addicted. I will continue this practice as Norfolk County District Attorney.

7. How would you address gun violence and domestic violence in Norfolk County?

There will be no tolerance for gun violence in Norfolk County and those who engage in such violence will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. No one should have to live in a home or a neighborhood where they are vulnerable to gun violence.

There is a clear connection between strong gun safety laws and lower rates of gun violence. We benefit from that in Massachusetts, but we cannot lower our resolve. Gun safety laws need to be enforced. The manufacture of ghost guns is on the rise. There is still a high correlation between Domestic Violence homicides and gun violence. Therefore, I support the ballot initiative to uphold House Bill 4885, which enacted several changes to the state's firearm regulations:

- developing an electronic registration system to track firearm ownership;
- prohibiting assault-style firearms (as defined in law);
- requiring safety certificates to obtain firearm permits;
- mandating serial numbers for firearms;
- allowing school administrators and licensed healthcare providers to request that a court issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order; and
- permitting courts to order firearm surrender when issuing Harassment Prevention Orders.

As to domestic violence, I intend to coordinate with organizations such as Jane Doe, Inc., DOVE, Inc. (of which I was a former board member), and to determine the best manner to handle these cases. Domestic violence is a complex issue that requires a deep understanding of the dynamics of this type of criminal behavior. I was very heartened by the Massachusetts' legislature's recent expansion of the 209A law to include evidence of coercive control as grounds for a restraining order. My approach to these cases would be to not revictimize the victim but hold any offender accountable. Accountability may look differently from case to case – the most violent offenders should be incarcerated, but in some circumstances, it is appropriate for an offender to receive in depth treatment geared towards prevention of further harm. Offenders need to know that they will be held accountable. Survivors of domestic violence need to be fully and unconditionally supported. When we partner with victims and community resources, we empower people to leave dangerous situations.

8. In what way(s) would you measure your success as DA?

Any prosecutor measures success by increased public safety. Crime rates tell part of the story, but not enough. Some crimes are currently underreported, such as domestic violence and crimes against immigrants. An increase in reports may be a good thing, if it means that we have built trust. Therefore, we need to look beyond the flat numbers.

I plan to meet with community leaders in every town either before taking office or in my first few months. I would ask those leaders to keep their fingers on the pulse of public safety and give me feedback. Is the DA's office working well with local organizations and law enforcement? Are we restoring trust and professionalism to the process?

I intend to implement data-gathering and analysis like what I have done at the Office of Medicaid Board of Hearings. A mark of success would be decreased racial disparities in charging, pre-trial detention, and sentencing. The only way to achieve that goal is an unflinching look at the data.

I intend to prioritize trial training so that every case gets the attention that it deserves from a fully prepared and professional office. There is no reason to outsource one high-profile trial for close to a million dollars when internal training can prepare our own prosecutors to handle serious cases. That is the responsibility of the District Attorney.

9. Is there anything else you would like voters to know about your vision for the District Attorney's office?

As a 23-year resident of Norfolk County, I want a DA's office we can all be proud of. I will lead a DA's office that would be effective than newsworthy. Transformational leadership needs to be motivated by public safety, not publicity. It requires the steady work of hiring, training, and leading a team of committed prosecutors, victim-witness advocates, investigators, and support staff.

I spent 32 years as a public servant in several capacities, and I have done so with compassion, fairness, and dedication. I want every community we serve to trust that their District Attorney wants to hear and address their concerns, without prejudice or politics getting in the way.