



# MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee

## 2022 Questionnaire – Governor

Candidate Name: Sonia Chang-Diaz

Party Affiliation: Democrat

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Please submit two high-resolution photos (300 dpi at full size) — one a head-and-shoulders or full-body shot, and one action shot in an educational/community setting — with your completed questionnaire. Please ensure that your campaign has full, royalty-free rights for reproducing these photos and state that in writing when they are sent to us.

### INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Teachers Association represents more than 115,000 active and retired educators in the Commonwealth's public schools, colleges and universities. The MTA has been a positive force for quality education since its founding in 1845. Educators in Massachusetts are proud that our state continues to be the highest-performing state in the country by many measures. In recent years, the MTA has increasingly focused attention on investing in the public schools, colleges and universities that our students and communities deserve.

### MTA ADVOCACY ON BEACON HILL — THREE KEY AREAS

- Strengthening Massachusetts' public schools, community colleges and universities to maximize student learning
- Defending and promoting the rights and benefits of public education employees
- Increasing revenues to ensure quality public education

Below is a series of statements based on major issues that make up the MTA's legislative agenda. For each statement, please indicate whether you:

- **AGREE** with MTA's position (will support the MTA's legislative recommendation)
- **DISAGREE** with MTA's position (will oppose the MTA's legislative recommendation)

*Feel free to elaborate briefly on any of these issues in order to clarify your position.*

## INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Discuss why you are running for governor. What are the major issues that you are most interested in working on if elected? Please use a separate sheet if more room is needed.

I'm running for Governor to tackle Massachusetts' broken systems and deep inequities and to deliver the bold, transformational change working families need to thrive.

I'm a mom, a former public school teacher, a state senator, and a grassroots organizer. I grew up moving between two different worlds, as a multiracial child with a single mom raised in a wealthy white community. My dad was an immigrant who came to America with \$50 in his pocket, and eventually became NASA's first Latino astronaut. My mom is a social worker who spent her career helping women and children struggling on the margins of society.

Each of my parents taught me about our country's incredible potential and opportunities. And how the only way we'll deliver on them is to raise our voices together, take action, and fight for our best values. That's why I became a teacher in one of the poorest, least-funded school districts in Massachusetts, and then an organizer for voting rights, for progressive change, and for more women in office.

In 2008, I was elected Massachusetts's first Latina and first Asian-American state senator — and I dedicated my career to fighting for, and winning, some of the state's biggest progressive reforms. The only woman of color in the Massachusetts Senate for many years, I designed and championed nation-leading education funding reforms passed in 2019 to provide \$1.5 billion annually in new equitable aid to K-12 districts across the state. I also faced off with Republican Governor Charlie Baker and Beacon Hill leadership to win comprehensive criminal justice reform in 2018, legislation to protect transgender rights in public accommodations passed in 2016, and 2020's police reform and accountability law. During that time, I've seen firsthand that too many elected officials on Beacon Hill are more concerned with holding onto power than doing good with it.

I'm running to ensure we meet the biggest challenges we face with urgency and with solutions to match — and make good on our promises to every family across the Commonwealth. In office, I would prioritize the biggest levers we have to fix our broken systems, grow our economy, and deliver real racial and economic justice:

- Universal, debt-free, quality education from birth into adulthood for every MA student. Including: universal and affordable early education and care, debt-free public higher education (both tuition-free and additional costs covered for students on Pell grants), and implementing the most progressive K-12 education funding system in the nation. The full plan here: <https://www.soniachangdiaz.com/plan/education-for-all>
- A Green New Deal for Massachusetts to win the fight against climate change and create tens of thousands of new, good-paying, family-sustaining jobs at the same time. Including 100% clean electricity by 2030, building a 21st-century transportation system, securing an equitable transition to green energy, and leading the fight for environmental justice. The full plan here: <https://www.soniachangdiaz.com/plan/ma-gnd>
- Economic opportunity, especially solving our statewide housing crisis and closing our cavernous racial wealth divide. More info: <https://www.soniachangdiaz.com/issues>

As Governor, I will continue to fight for working families in Massachusetts and end the delays, foot-dragging, and band-aids that define the approach that Beacon Hill insiders have taken to the biggest issues facing our state.

## STRENGTHENING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TO MAXIMIZE STUDENT LEARNING

1. The passage of the *Student Opportunity Act*, which was signed into law in November 2019, was a major victory for students, for educators, for communities and for racial and economic justice. When the new law is fully phased in, it will increase annual state funding for public education by \$1.5 billion over inflation. Much of that money will go to low-income districts — disproportionately communities of color — that have been left behind by our Commonwealth's outdated and inequitable funding system.
  - A. The MTA is committed to ensuring that the new funding is fully phased in by the Legislature as of fiscal year 2027, in accordance with provisions of the *Student Opportunity Act*.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

The SOA is a generational game-changer for our public schools, period. We spent too long, and fought too

hard, for it to not be implemented with fidelity. As Governor, I will veto any budget that does not keep the SOA on schedule for full implementation by FY27.

- B. The MTA strongly believes that local educators, parents, school committee members and administrators — not state education officials — must play the central role in determining how the new funding will be spent in their districts.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

The question of whether the state or local stakeholders should play the primary role in determining how new funding should be spent was a hotly debated question during the 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission — and as co-chair I helped broker a report that kept authority with local decision makers, even when some powerful stakeholders at that table were pushing hard in the opposite direction. I was then proud to stand alongside the MTA and local stakeholders across the state to hold that line in both the writing of the PROMISE Act and the negotiations of the Student Opportunity Act. This was a major open question, and together we made sure that the final bill gave autonomy to local districts and parents to decide how best to meet their students' needs.

2. Public higher education promotes student success and is essential to economic growth and job creation. To maintain and improve our competitive position in Massachusetts, we must have a first-rate system of affordable and accessible public higher education. State financial support for higher education has plummeted. When adjusted for inflation, per-student state spending on public higher education has been cut by 31 percent since FY 2001. As state funding has declined, tuition and fees have continued to increase to make up for state cuts to public higher education, resulting in the burden of student debt increasing for students and their families. At a time when student debt is at an all-time high, additional state funding is needed to preserve access to higher education and relieve the untenable financial pressures facing students.

- A. The MTA supports increasing funding to our public colleges and universities, in line with the goals of the proposed *Cherish Act*, for public higher education.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

- B. The MTA supports legislation to guarantee debt-free public higher education as a right for all residents by creating a state grant program to pay the equivalent of tuition and mandatory fees to an eligible student attending any Massachusetts public college or university or certificate, vocational or training program at a public institution, up to the equivalent of four years of public college or university.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

Our disinvestment from our public higher education system has led to overwhelming debt burdens for our residents, a widening racial gap in our economy, and a threat to the academic and intellectual leadership our state has provided the nation and world. We need to reverse course on this, and I am committed to ensuring that every student attending our public colleges and universities is able to do so debt-free. I am a proud co-sponsor of the MTA-supported bill to accomplish this goal, and I support progressive revenue-generating mechanisms to fund this work.

3. The MTA supports policies that promote the success of quality public schools that serve all children. We believe that the expansion of Commonwealth charter schools in Massachusetts diverts critical resources from local schools and creates an education system that is separate and unequal. As evidenced by the overwhelming defeat of Question 2 on the November 2016 ballot, it is clear that the majority of Massachusetts voters agree with the MTA.

For the benefit of all students, the MTA supports the following charter school restrictions and reforms:

- Keeping the current cap on Commonwealth charter schools.
- Requiring local approval of any new Commonwealth charter schools.
- Requiring any new charter schools to be established and managed by a nonprofit organization or entity
- Requiring licensure of all teachers.
- Ensuring that charter schools adhere to the same administrative rules as public schools concerning public records, as well as open-meeting and procurement requirements concerning recruiting and retaining students to reflect the demographics of the community.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

The charter school cap question was decided overwhelmingly by the voters in 2016, and I stand by that decision. In very targeted cases where high-need populations such as homeless students or students returning from having dropped out of school might benefit from alternative schooling models, local communities should be able to make the case to state leaders that particular exceptions to the cap are warranted. While I have questions about what the local approval of new charter schools entails, I support reforming the law to require BESE to consider the impact of a charter application on the district schools in the communities from which the proposed charter school would

draw students. I also support the other requirements listed in the question, and several years ago I wrote and passed through the Senate legislation that would have implemented them.

4. Parents, students and educators across the Commonwealth are pushing back against the high-stakes MCAS exams. Among the many serious concerns about the MCAS are the excessive amount of time and money spent on creating and implementing the tests and the high stakes attached to the results. In addition, research clearly shows that standardized tests such as the MCAS demonstrate and reinforce racial and economic inequities across school districts. The MTA supports the following changes to address the Commonwealth's current testing system:

- Eliminate the high-stakes nature of the MCAS test for high school graduation.
- Reduce the state's emphasis on standardized testing by changing education law to allow the use of alternative measures of academic success.
- Expand state support to local school districts to develop their own school accountability and assessment frameworks such as those currently being developed and piloted through Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment (MCIEA).

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

We owe it to our students to ensure that they are receiving the high-quality education we promise them, and in order to hold ourselves accountable, we need a measurement tool. MCAS is that tool at the moment, but I do not believe that MCAS is perfect or even preferred. I believe we need a successor assessment in place before transitioning away from MCAS and strongly support the development of alternative assessments, especially through the MCIEA. I have supported this work for years and, in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, I fought for and won an amendment to support their ongoing work of developing an alternative assessment, bringing together my colleagues in the Senate to support it and saving the line item from being zeroed out. I will continue this commitment as Governor.

5. The MTA supports policies that shift focus in school and district improvement efforts from penalization to collaborative, community-centered support that promotes involvement by parents, educators and community members while preserving collective bargaining rights for all educators working in these schools.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

It is in everyone's interest for DESE to shift from a posture of punishment to one of proactive support. The Supreme Judicial Court has affirmed that the state has a constitutional obligation to ensure each child is receiving a good education, and so DESE will always have an important seat at the table in these efforts. But the role of the local community is just as crucial and has been sadly overlooked in recent years. Educators, parents, students, and community stakeholders are the backbone of our public schools and need to be deeply involved with and bought into any school turnaround effort - it simply won't work otherwise.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated to the public what educators, students and our communities have known for decades – that state disinvestment has left our public schools in a chronic state of disrepair, especially in working-class communities and communities of color. Even before the pandemic, ventilation systems in too many schools could not maintain healthy indoor air quality. The MTA is advocating for additional funding to the Massachusetts School Building Authority to start addressing the most urgent safety needs while establishing green, healthy and equitable building standards.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

Upgrading our school buildings to improve air quality, increase energy efficiency, and install modern, fossil fuel-free HVAC and power systems makes sense on every level: it's better for the health of our students and the adults who educate and care for them, it's good for the future of our planet, and it's cost-effective over the long haul. An energy-efficient school district with 4,000 students can save as much as \$160,000 a year in energy costs, which means in many cases these projects pay for themselves — and then some — over time. It can be a challenge, however, for schools to secure the upfront capital for these projects, and to manage the complexities of planning, finance, procurement and installation. As Governor, I'll bring together representatives from local school districts, the Massachusetts School Building Authority, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, and Mass Save to identify and implement innovative financing approaches — whether through federal COVID relief aid to districts, infrastructure aid to the state, MSBA reimbursement, green energy transition grants, or a combination thereof — and technical assistance to support planning and project management so we can ensure safety and dramatically expand the number of green schools in our state.

7. The Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap calls for retrofitting buildings to reduce greenhouse gasses. The MTA strongly supports this goal, which is why we endorsed *An Act for healthy and green public schools*, which calls for the

development of new standards to create healthy and green public school buildings. Specifically, the legislation charges the Commonwealth to take the following steps:

- Assess the extent to which school buildings provide students with a healthy environment that is conducive to learning while efficiently using energy and resources and limiting exposure to toxic building materials.
- Develop standards for healthy and green schools.
- Offer recommendations and a plan for all schools to equitably meet healthy and green school standards by 2050.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

In addition to the points mentioned in the previous response, I have released a comprehensive platform to combat climate change – [A Green New Deal for Massachusetts](#) – which will, among many improvements on the 2050 Roadmap, eliminate carbon emissions from all new buildings by 2030 and from all existing buildings by 2045. I am the only candidate in this race to commit to this.

8. Decades of disinvestment and deferred maintenance have left our public colleges and universities in a state of disrepair. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the urgency of addressing this infrastructure crisis, with many campuses having facilities that were unprepared to mitigate the spread of the virus and ensure healthy air flow. Infrastructure repairs have in recent years been taken on by campuses. The costs have then been passed onto students as campus fees, which in turn has contributed to the mounting burden of student debt. Campus buildings, which are state buildings, must be paid for by state dollars. The MTA is advocating for a substantial investment in public higher education infrastructure in order to better protect students and educators as well as the environment through green-building initiatives.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

9. The Commonwealth's current educator licensure process is excluding talented and qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds by requiring that they pass the multi-part Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL). Research clearly shows that candidates of color consistently have far lower passing rates on the tests than white candidates, thus making clear that they are a significant barrier to creating a more diverse educator workforce. The MTA supports efforts to recruit and retain educators of color, including through a statutory change to allow the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to approve alternative measures of proficiency to the MTEL for candidates for educator licensure.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

I strongly support efforts to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce, and in the recent ARPA bill I filed an amendment for \$10 million to invest in this work. We do a disservice to our students, our educators, and our democracy every day we continue to fail on this front.

10. The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that systemic racism is embedded within all institutions in our society, including public education. The MTA strongly believes that it is in our public schools that we can take meaningful steps toward dismantling systemic racism – acknowledging the painful histories that have brought us to this moment – and building an antiracist society. As part of this effort, the MTA supports *An Act relative to anti-racism, equity and justice in education*, which would create a Commission for Anti-Racism and Equity in Education that would work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to:

- Develop curricula with a social justice perspective of dismantling racism and advise on improving the history and social sciences framework.
- Ensure that ethnic studies, racial justice, decolonizing history, and unlearning racism are taught at all grade levels using a critical approach and pedagogy.
- Ensure that educators have access to professional development that fosters equitable, inclusive curriculum and pedagogy and practices that support racial justice.
- Support efforts to increase, support and retain educators of color in our public school workforce.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

As a former social studies teacher, as a policy maker, and as a mother of school-aged children, anti-racism work is a cornerstone of both my professional and my personal life. In my 13 years in the Legislature, unfortunately, I have seen firsthand how commissions too often end up slowing the pace of change (including racial equity work), rather than being a catalyst for it. (A notable exception to this rule was the 2014-2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission, which produced a high-impact report only with [significant inside-outside organizing](#).)

Many of these critical issues are incorporated into Massachusetts's [current curriculum framework for history and social sciences](#) (eg, p18 and p13). A commission would be unlikely to have the power or capacity to do the work to ensure these curriculum standards are actually being implemented and addressed in classrooms across the Commonwealth.

Instead of passing, developing, and implementing a new commission, which would then require significant time from state employees and unpaid members of the public, my administration will work closely with districts and racial justice leaders (as I have done throughout my career) to support and provide backup to local school officials and educators who are bringing these curricula topics to life. My administration will also seek out feedback from BIPOC advocates, teachers, students, and parents through existing structures to more nimbly identify and implement changes to the curriculum framework where it needs improvement.

## DEFENDING AND PROMOTING RIGHTS AND BENEFITS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

1. Massachusetts is one of 15 states that has its own state pension plan for public employees and does not participate in the federal Social Security system. In 2011, the Commonwealth made changes to the state's public employee pension system. These changes required employees hired after April 2, 2012, to work longer, and some of their benefits were reduced.

The MTA supports the current defined-benefit pension system for all its members and opposes any changes in laws that diminish this pension benefit.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

I voted against that 2011 bill — even though it meant standing up to the Senate President and a veto-proof majority of my colleagues — as I didn't believe future employees should have to bear the burden of the poor fiscal choices of past legislatures, and that there were plenty of resources available to tap in order to cover the pension liability that existed.

2. The MTA supports the right of public employees — including retirees — to collectively bargain over health insurance and believes that no additional changes to the collective bargaining process are needed. Since the law modifying municipal health insurance bargaining went into effect, almost all of the hundreds of millions of dollars in savings has been paid for by public employees. The MTA believes that further health care savings must come from health care cost containment — not by eroding collective bargaining, reducing health insurance benefits for public employees, or increasing their share of health insurance costs.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

I joined the MTA and several other unions in supporting the municipal health reform compromise of 2011 and agree that we shouldn't go further than these reforms did. At the end of the day, we must also recognize that cost shifting is not cost savings. If the costs of health care continue to rise so steeply that the state, as an employer, cannot hold the line on the employee contribution rate at 25%, this should be a wake-up call for us that we are failing at cost containment and need to get serious about cutting the huge proportion of healthcare spending that currently goes to insurance and billing bureaucracy, by moving to a single-payer system. I'm the only candidate in this race who's a supporter of single-payer health care, as I have been throughout my career, and I will continue to fight for it as Governor.

3. Currently, public employees are eligible for health insurance when they retire from one of the 104 contributory retirement systems for public employees in Massachusetts. Maintaining a robust system that will continue to attract and retain high-quality state and municipal career employees is vital.

The MTA's position is that we must fight efforts to weaken health insurance benefits for current and future public employees and retirees and there should be no change to retiree health insurance unless it: (1) protects current retirees from changes in post-retirement health benefits, (2) maintains the current retiree health benefit for long-serving public employees, and (3) protects current employees.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

4. The MTA believes that all retired Massachusetts public employees deserve a full cost-of-living increase each year to protect retirees' pensions from the ravages of inflation. The MTA's position is that there should be an annual appropriation for a full COLA at least equal to the Social Security COLA provided for employees covered by that system.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

I strongly agree with the principles here that retirees should be protected from the corrosive effect of inflation. When it comes to implementing these changes, I don't yet have a sufficient plan for how to pay for the substantial policy change of pegging the state COLA to the Social Security COLA and applying that rate to retirees' full pension. As Governor, I will want to work with the MTA to develop a financing plan for this goal in concert with the other priorities articulated in this questionnaire, and I will want to learn more about why the state does not allow public employees to participate in Social Security.

5. In order to reduce costs, Massachusetts' public colleges and universities are relying more and more on adjunct faculty. Many of these faculty members work at several public colleges and universities and are therefore deemed to have more than one employer. Because of this, many fall short of the "part-time" employment status required to be eligible for health insurance or participate in the state pension system. The MTA's position is that state employee pension benefits and health insurance coverage should be extended to part-time higher education faculty who teach at least four three-credit courses per school/calendar year.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

6. The MTA supports legislation to ensure that municipal employees are covered by the Commonwealth's minimum wage and paid family and medical leave laws. Currently, the state's minimum wage law does not apply to municipal workers, and municipal employers are required to adhere only to the federal minimum wage, which is just \$7.25 an hour compared to the current Massachusetts minimum wage of \$14.25 an hour. Regarding paid family and medical leave, municipalities currently have the option to include their employees in the program but are not required to do so as they would be under the MTA proposal.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

7. Massachusetts public employees, including educators, are currently prohibited by law from engaging in a strike, regardless of their working conditions or whether their employer may have committed unfair labor practices. The MTA strongly believes that a ban on public employees striking is unjust and outdated and that it unfairly restricts the ability of public employees to take collective action in support of themselves and the communities they serve.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

Educators, like police and fire fighters, provide essential services to the communities in which they work. I want to learn more about models in other states and nations that have recognized a right to strike for essential workers as a last resort after other resolution measures have been exhausted.

8. Current state law prohibits public employees from fundraising for their own political campaigns as well as for other political committees, including political action committees organized by their unions. These limitations unfairly punish public employees, limiting their ability to successfully run for office themselves and preventing them from fully supporting political action committees that will advocate for their interests. The MTA strongly believes that the prohibition on public employee political fundraising should be amended to allow public employees to fundraise for themselves as well as for political action committees organized by their unions.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

I believe it's common sense to expand public employees' ability to fundraise for their own political campaigns and other political committees, as long as there are sufficient safeguards to protect employees from being pressured to fundraise for their employers who may be running for office.

## RAISING REVENUES TO ENSURE QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

1. The MTA supports increasing revenues to adequately fund public education and invest in our communities. The MTA is working as a coalition partner in the Raise Up Massachusetts campaign for a Fair Share Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution that would raise revenue for education and transportation by asking those who annually earn more than \$1 million to pay 4 percentage points more on the amount over \$1 million.

**Agree with MTA position**       **Disagree with MTA position**

I've co-sponsored and campaigned for the Fair Share Amendment consistently since its first introduction.

2. In addition to supporting the Fair Share Amendment, the MTA supports raising funds through the following progressive corporate revenue proposals:

- GILTI (Global Intangible Low-Taxed Income) – Many multinational corporations that do business in Massachusetts dodge taxes by using provisions of the federal tax code to shift their U.S. profits to offshore tax havens. Massachusetts should do the same as other states and federal law, taxing a portion of those offshore profit.
- Tiered Corporate Minimum Tax – This proposal would ensure that larger corporations pay a minimum corporate tax bill in proportion to the size of their business in the Commonwealth, while small businesses would continue paying the current corporate minimum excise tax of just \$456 per year.
- Corporate Disclosure – Research and informed policymaking to close corporate loopholes are made more difficult because of the lack of available information about how much taxes specific corporations pay. Corporate disclosure laws would help identify corporate bad actors, measure the effects of existing corporate tax loopholes, and generate additional future

revenue by closing corporate tax loopholes.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

I am proud to be the Senate filer of the GILTI bill, as well as another bill that would require all corporate tax credits be reviewed for their efficacy every three years and sunsetted if they are not shown to be fulfilling their intended goals. For over a decade I've been fighting to add progressivity to our state income tax and generate over \$1 billion in new revenue, including by sponsoring *An Act to Invest in Our Communities*, the precursor to the Fair Share Amendment. Wealthy individuals and large corporations have gotten away for too long without paying their fair share of taxes, to the detriment of our schools, communities, and economy.

3. The MTA believes firmly that during an economic downturn or financial crisis, that the Commonwealth should enact progressive revenue policies to meet its budgetary needs rather than implementing funding cuts to crucial public services such as preK-12 and higher education.

Agree with MTA position       Disagree with MTA position

I came into office in January 2009, in the midst of the Great Recession. I've seen firsthand the devastating cuts that can happen when leaders make the choice to run from progressive revenue reforms. I've fought from day one to enact progressive revenue reforms and to build fiscal policy that can weather downturns without devastating the investments that are so crucial to our communities' ability to thrive.

## SHORT ANSWERS

*Please use a separate sheet if more room is needed.*

1. Massachusetts has excellent public schools. But there are challenges that hinder student success.

- What is your assessment of our preK-12 public education system?

Today our state is known for our education system. We boast the nation's top K-12 test scores along with the world's top universities. That education system is also the engine that powers our state's continued economic growth.

But beneath the surface it's also clear that only some students, from some communities, are given the chance to succeed in our current system. Poor kids and kids of color continue to face underfunded classrooms and yawning opportunity and achievement gaps due to long-standing inequalities. At the same time, too many working families can't afford early child care when they need it, and students are saddled with decades of debt after they work hard to earn their degree.

It's time to make good on our core values, truly address systemic inequities in our education system, and give every child the chance to reach their dreams regardless of income, race, or zip code.

Together with the MTA, I've been proud to win lasting commitments to address inequities in our K-12 system, through the 2019 Student Opportunity Act, the 2017 English language instruction reform, and landmark bills to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline by stemming our reliance on heavy-handed discipline tactics and by eliminating the requirement for districts to employ police officers in schools. But truly delivering on this promise means tackling the persistent, structural problems at every stage from birth into adulthood.

We must pursue bold solutions that meet both the moral and economic imperatives of the 21st century. When it comes to our preK-12 system, the Chang-Díaz Administration will:

- Establish a universal system of high-quality, accessible, and affordable early education and child care for all young children and their families.
- Fully implement the Student Opportunity Act and partner with schools to support implementation of best practices to:
  - Close the K-12 opportunity and achievement gaps in our state
  - Increase the availability of behavioral health services in schools
  - Increase racial and ethnic diversity in our teaching and school administrator workforce, and



- Dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline
- Many students in our urban and rural communities – including our Gateway Cities – face a complex set of issues, such as homelessness, unaddressed physical and mental health issues, poverty, crime, the need to learn English as a second language and parents working several jobs to keep afloat. Studies demonstrate that these factors significantly affect student outcomes. What programs would you invest in or initiate to address student poverty and other issues that have adverse impacts on our students?

While education is a critical component to giving every student an equal chance to discover and achieve their dreams, our schools do not exist in a vacuum. We cannot expect our educators to perform miracles and fix all of the disparities, barriers, traumas, and discrimination that our students face on their own. It's incumbent on us to give schools the tools and resources to support students as they face poverty, racism, and other issues, while also tackling the structural problems these students encounter outside the schoolhouse door.

We need to tackle the interconnected, structural problems our students face through every policy avenue available to us. That includes tackling our state's housing crisis head-on by stabilizing the housing market, expanding tools to limit runaway rent increases, and putting the dream of home ownership within reach for working families. It also means effectively implementing the reforms we've passed to our broken policing and criminal justice systems to reduce the violence and trauma that students of color experience, and invest in overpoliced communities.

It will also take intentional economic development and wealth-building in both urban and rural communities through mechanisms like the Bolling Bill, the Work and Family Mobility Act, a Green New Deal for Massachusetts, and targeting ARPA resources to address racial and economic disparities as outlined in the [Racial Equity Scorecard](#) that I helped design.

At the same time, we must continue to invest in giving every student a quality education, regardless of race, zip code, or family income. We need to start with a universal, affordable early education and care system, as that is the single biggest lever in our education system to influence the trajectory of a child and a family. But the average annual cost of infant care in Massachusetts is a nation-leading \$20,000, more than some families will pay for a year of college. And even those who can afford it often struggle to find a provider. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, over half of all people in Massachusetts lived in child care deserts. We've been kicking the can down the road on this issue for too long, and it's time to get real. I've been filing legislation for years to implement this in a systematic and scalable way, and I will continue fighting for this until the job is done.

Furthermore, decades of disinvestment have left us with some of the biggest K-12 educational gaps between wealthy and poor communities in our nation. Over and over again we see the direct correlation between resources and student outcomes. It's why I led the successful fight to include low-income students in the Foundation Budget Review Commission's recommendations, and why I partnered with the MTA in the fight for the PROMISE Act, which resulted in my proudest moment as a senator: the passage of the Student Opportunity Act and the \$1.5 billion it will inject into our most needful public schools.

Yet even after achieving this generational success, and once we've fully implemented the SOA funding, the fight will continue to ensure that the funds are reaching the children who need it the most. We need to be reducing class sizes, restoring language programs and school libraries and the arts, and investing in curricula and books that bring the cultures, experiences, and beautiful histories of our diverse student bodies into their classrooms so they can see themselves in their own education. We also need to invest deeply in non-academic wraparound supports, like social workers, guidance counselors, and school nurses. We should be exploring ways to expand the Community Schools model, establishing family resource centers in schools, connecting families to medical care, adult basic education, youth services, and other supports that will allow all families to thrive.

Finally, language access continues to be a major hurdle for so many of our families. I saw it with my own eyes as a teacher in Boston and Lynn, and my father experienced it first hand when he came to this country. In 2017, I championed and was the lead negotiator in finalizing the LOOK Act to allow multilingual education in our school districts, and the state should be doing everything it can do to support our districts in transitioning to these models.

- Educators in Massachusetts are concerned that an emphasis on high-stakes testing is crowding out other important school activities. What would you do to address this issue?

In addition to adequately funding our schools overall so they don't have to make false choices between things like arts programming and mathematics, we need to continue investing in the promising tools being developed and implemented through the MA Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment. We owe it to our students to ensure that they are receiving the high-quality education we promise them, and in order to hold ourselves accountable, we need a measurement tool, but I do not believe that MCAS is perfect or even preferred. Many of the things that we value in our schools cannot be quantitatively measured, and my administration will focus on broadening the tools we have in our toolbox to evaluate and support our schools and districts and to provide important information to families about their children's learning environments. To that end, in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, I fought for and won an amendment to support the ongoing work of MCIEA, bringing together my colleagues in the Senate to support it and saving the line item from being zeroed out.

It's also crucial that DESE shift from a posture of assessing and punishing to one of proactive support. This has been magnified throughout the pandemic on issues in our schools well beyond assessment. The distrust and resentment between the department, districts, and educators is damaging to all involved. Rather than after-the-fact blame, DESE needs to work proactively with school districts, in the interest of all students, before concerns arise.

- At the end of four years in office, what changes do you hope to have made in the area of preK-12 public education? Please provide two or three examples.
  - i. SOA fully implemented.
  - ii. Legislation enacted putting MA on a path to universal, publicly-funded pre-school.
  - iii. MCIEA continues to grow and scale their assessment model.

2. Since FY 2001, state higher education spending per student has been cut by 31 percent when adjusting for inflation. Additionally, our public colleges and universities, particularly our community colleges, are relying more on adjunct faculty who are not comparably paid to full-time faculty; course offerings have shrunk; student support services, such as counseling, have been cut; and tuition and especially fees have gone up steadily.

- What is your assessment of our public higher education system?

The question states it perfectly. An accessible and thriving public higher education system is crucial to our economy and to the professional and intellectual lives of our residents. We've been failing to steward this resource for years. State spending on higher education is lower than it was in 2001. In FY22, our state spent more on prisons, parole, and probation (\$1.62B) than we did on all of public higher education (\$1.39B).

To make up the gap, state colleges and universities have raised tuition and fees to cover costs — meaning that students and working families have increasingly taken on crushing debt to make up the difference, or foregone higher education altogether, while businesses are left scrambling for talent.

As a result, Massachusetts currently has one of the fastest growing higher education debt burdens in the country. Worse still, graduates of public higher education institutions in Massachusetts — who are disproportionately low-income students and students of color — are more likely to take on debt, and in higher amounts, than if they went to a private college.

Low completion rates mean that too many students end their studies before receiving a degree, with only debt to show for their time. Just under 40% of first-time students in MA earn their first undergraduate degree or certificate within six years of enrolling in a two-year community college. And, while completion rates for students beginning a public 4-year program are higher, there is a significant gap by race: nearly one-quarter of Black or Latino students who start won't complete their degree within six years.

To maintain our advantage as a highly educated state, and to support young people, working families, and our economy, we must make bold investments in our public higher education system. As Governor, my administration will pass and implement legislation to provide debt-free public college for all Massachusetts students by covering all tuition and mandatory fees, as well as additional costs (such as room and board and books) for students who are eligible for Federal Pell Grants.

- What would you do to address the inequities faced by adjunct faculty?
  - I will support measures to extend state employee pension benefits and health insurance coverage to adjunct faculty. I will also support unionization efforts by adjunct faculty and work with MTA and other stakeholders to learn more about the ongoing inequities they experience and structural measures we can implement to address them.
- At the end of four years in office, what changes do you hope to have made in the area of public higher education? Please give two or three examples.
  - Debt-free public higher education bill passed into law
  - Reversing the trend of disinvestment in public higher education
  - Pass and implement legislation, modeled on legislation I've sponsored in the State Senate for over a decade, to ensure that undocumented immigrants who already reside in Massachusetts, pay Massachusetts taxes, and attend Massachusetts high schools are eligible for in-state tuition rates and the other public higher education benefits outlined in my [education platform](#).
  - State is on track to implement my Green New Deal for Massachusetts, including the transitioning of all public higher education buildings to zero emissions.

3. The governance of public education in Massachusetts is very complex. Leaving local governance issues aside, the governor appoints the secretary of education and members of the boards of Elementary and Secondary Education, Early Education and Care, and Higher Education, as well as the Board of Trustees of the University of Massachusetts, the secretary of health and human services and other senior staff. The appropriate boards, in turn, appoint the commissioners to run the departments which oversee these different segments of public education.

- Upon taking office, what qualities would you look for in individuals you appoint? Will you commit to selecting appointees who will respect collective bargaining agreements?

Collective bargaining agreements are important tools in ensuring a safe, supportive, and transparent environment for educators and students alike, and they should be respected to the fullest extent of the law. Several of the various board seats are reserved for nomination by outside organizations. But of those for whom the governor has full nominating authority, I will work to assemble a board that represents the lived experience of the diverse communities of our state that depend upon our public education system, with a clear focus on equity and opportunity for all students.

- What specific charge and direction would you give to each of these boards to carry out? What directive would you give them in dealing with various constituencies such as the MTA?

It's critical that our state education officials consult, collaborate, and work closely with educators on the ground, who are carrying out the work of educating our students and facing down our biggest challenges every day. I will make it a top priority to work together with MTA and educators, parents, and district leaders to forge new, mutually supportive partnerships between the state and our districts.

I would charge all of the education boards with making sure that a quality education for every student is a lived reality for all students, from birth into adulthood. Being data driven; making sure underrepresented voices are truly welcome, heard, and seated at their tables; and walking in the shoes of our students, parents, and educators are key ways of doing the work that I would also charge my appointees with in order to get to the best outcomes.

5. The MTA firmly believes that the ability to organize strong unions and to collectively bargain are essential rights that enable workers to build better lives for themselves, their families and our communities. In public education, students benefit from educators' unions because educators' working conditions are students' learning conditions. This has never been clearer than during the COVID-19 pandemic when educators, through their unions, negotiated for critical health and safety measures at public schools and colleges. Do you agree with the MTA's position, and would you publicly support educators' unions fighting for fair contracts and working conditions, including by meeting with union members and participating in union-organized actions?

Unions have been the backbone of the middle class in our country for generations, and as a former AFT

member myself, I strongly support the right of all employees - in public education and any sector of our economy - to organize and collectively bargain. Among my first actions as a candidate for governor was to visit the nurses picketing at St. Vincent's Hospital in Worcester, to support their courageous and ultimately successful fight for better working conditions. As a parent of school-aged children, I also know that their teachers feeling respected, seen, and able to succeed in their work is a foundational ingredient to my children's educational success. Workers should have a seat at the table in determining the conditions of their workplaces, and I will continue to support this right as Governor.

5. Describe the role you see for unions in developing education policy and district- and school-based decision-making. How do you see your role as governor in working with unions representing state education employees?

Educators are a crucial voice in the development of education policy, which is why I spent years partnering with the MTA, AFT, and BTU to enact the Foundation Budget Review Commission reforms. I believe deeply in the adage "nothing about us without us" when it comes to policymaking, and as Governor I will continue to include educator unions alongside representatives of school districts, parents, and students in the development of state education policy.

6. Explain your position on the state's takeover of the Lawrence, Holyoke, and Southbridge public school districts. Will you commit to taking those districts out of receivership and returning them to local democratic control, and will you commit to not placing other districts under receivership moving forward?

While receivership was developed as a tactic to combat our state's yawning opportunity gaps between districts, it's not clear that it has delivered improvement in these areas — despite being in place in one district for over a decade. I've heard serious concerns from parents, educators, and school committee members in districts currently under receivership, both about the lack of improvement brought by receivership status and the undemocratic nature of being in receivership. As Governor, I would work to reform the receivership system to ensure the state has to live up to the same concept of accountability that we require of districts, and that there are clear parameters for exiting receivership.

I would also require DESE to perform a thorough and publicly-available review of district data to fairly evaluate the impact of receivership on students, including adjustments for recent events like the pandemic and the beneficial effects of funding from the Student Opportunity Act. I would also seek assistance from an independent third party to perform an analysis and make public findings to the Department on the effectiveness of receivership.

If receivership has failed to produce significantly better results for students, districts should be returned to local control and the state should work in partnership with the district to identify what else their students and educators need to succeed.

7. In early 2018, the Group Insurance Commission, which serves hundreds of thousands of active and retired public employees, voted to significantly reduce the number of health insurance providers available to its subscribers. The details of these changes were not made available to the public prior to the vote. Nor were there opportunities for members of the public to comment on the proposed changes or adequately assess the impacts. Though the GIC ultimately changed course, the process that led to this decision remains flawed and highlights the need for greater transparency concerning decisions that impact subscribers.
- As governor, what steps would you take to ensure greater transparency and a more thoughtful deliberative process in the GIC's decision-making?
  - As governor, would you support efforts to mandate advanced public notice and public hearings prior to important GIC votes and to increase employee representation on the commission?

I shared the MTA's strong opposition to the GIC's 2018 decision to suddenly restrict coverage options for tens of thousands of public servants, without any warning or transparency. Thankfully, the public outrage and organized pushback led them to reverse their decision, and the previous health plans remain accessible to GIC members. Upon learning of the GIC's decision I immediately co-sponsored emergency legislation to put a 90-day waiting period and requirement of legislative notification on any changes to GIC insurance contracts, and a commitment to at least this level of transparency and accountability will be a criterion for any GIC commissioners I name as Governor.

This is just one more example of why a transition to a single-payer model is the only just way to provide health care. Even my small-government Republican grandfather, who was a rural doctor in Montana, once told me, “The only way I see to get greed out of health care — where it doesn’t belong — is with a single payer system.” The experience of every other industrialized nation in the world has shown us that it simultaneously lowers costs and improves outcomes, and I am the only candidate in this race that supports this common sense approach.

8. As governor, you would have an opportunity to reach people throughout the state and set a direction and common purpose for moving the Commonwealth forward. The command of the bully pulpit is a powerful tool.
- Around what issues are you prepared to use the bully pulpit? Describe your experience in shaping public opinion to achieve change.

The short answer is: all of them. During my time as a legislator, I’ve fought for and won major reforms repeatedly across two different Governor’s administrations, several Senate Presidents, and two House Speakers.

Of these reforms, multiple laws were passed in spite of initial opposition from legislative leadership and the Governor’s office — including \$1.5 billion in progressive education funding, comprehensive criminal justice reform and nation-leading police accountability, and LGBTQ rights. I won these measures through collaboration across traditional legislative and party barriers inside the State House and through deep organizing to build grassroots coalitions to push for bold, progressive change.

I am guided every day in my public life by the words of Frederick Douglass that “power concedes nothing without a demand.” The failure to act with urgency to push our leaders and politics to a better place is one of the great failings of our current administration, and that will change on day one when I am Governor.

The Governor has significant power to set the pace and scope of change on Beacon Hill and overcome the Legislature’s inertia on issues just like this. I haven’t been afraid to challenge leaders in both parties when necessary, and work together with leaders in both parties, to pass key reforms. That’s exactly the model I’ll bring to the corner office.

9. How would you make yourself available to the MTA to discuss questions or concerns that affect our members and our students?

I have been proud to develop strong partnerships with the MTA throughout my time in office to pass bold, transformational legislation for all our educators and students. As Governor, I will look to continue our partnership by bringing MTA to the table, listening and working together with MTA and your members to address our biggest challenges in the education space, and make sure that educators’ voices are heard in my administration and in the State House.

*This questionnaire is for the exclusive use of the Massachusetts Teachers Association Candidate Recommendation Committee for determining whether to recommend a candidate to our members.*

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