



**Chris Dempsey for State Auditor  
Our Revolution Massachusetts  
Questionnaire Responses**

Submitted: April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**1. What's one thing you learned from the Bernie Sanders presidential campaigns?**

I happened to visit Portland, Oregon, in August, 2015, for a friend's wedding. That was the same time that Bernie held a 28,000-person rally at the Rose Garden Arena Moda Center, the campaign's largest rally to that point in time. The energy in the city was palpable, and clearly drew from the grassroots. Literally, as we walked around the city people were striking up conversations and asking us if we were attending Bernie's rally. Bernie's presidential campaigns have reminded us all that grassroots campaigns are the best campaigns, because they are powered by people. When candidates run grassroots campaigns, they expand what our democracy can be, and they make it possible to achieve policy goals that previously felt out of reach. I'm proud to be running just that kind of campaign. We have more than 1,500 individual contributors, by far the most in the race. We have all candidates in this race at a significantly lower average contribution size (about \$200). And we are organizing across the state: our organizing meeting in February had representatives from all 40 Senate districts statewide, and we are one of the few statewide campaigns that have that kind of organizing strength. It has been inspiring to see the passion across the country that followed the Sanders Campaign and I look to build a similar enthusiasm across the Commonwealth as I work to make sure this government by the people delivers the best it can for *all* of the people.

**2. Will you publicly renounce support and refuse funds from any Political Action Committees (PACs) funded by or representing companies and individuals that fuel and profit from climate change, and do you pledge that your campaign will not accept funding from companies and individuals that fuel and profit from the climate crisis, especially the fossil-fuel industry and the financial institutions (banks, investment firms, and insurance companies) that back the industry?**

No Position. Our campaign is people-powered, not fossil-fuel powered. As I've traveled the state, I've made campaign trips by transit, walking, and biking (check out [#mapoliontransit](#) on Twitter). I have committed to putting climate front and center in the Auditor's Office, including by making the office the first in the country to incorporate carbon accounting into our audits of state agencies. I will also create an Auditor's Commission on Environmental Justice so that communities on the front lines of the crisis have a seat at the table on Beacon Hill. We need everyone at the table to address the climate crisis and to achieve environmental justice. However, I have not solicited campaign contributions from fossil-fuel-linked PACs or employees of large fossil-fuel companies.

**3. What will you do to ensure the protection of essential workers (healthcare workers, teachers, store staff, etc.) in MA from exploitation by their employers during COVID (and potentially other, future pandemics or disasters) that puts them at high-risk?**

As auditor, I will be a watchdog to protect state workers and those working for vendors to state government. It is clear we need an audit and evaluation of our COVID response, and how the state succeeded and failed in protection of workers. The pandemic highlighted many of the longstanding faults in our system of health and safety, social services, and labor protections; a serious and thoughtful retrospective of these events can help us build back better a system that works for everyone, in crisis times and in normal times.

**4. The University of Massachusetts has consistently failed to include Disability Services' voice in or tell the department in advance of the announcement of decisions that disproportionately affect students with disabilities. Across several instances, this has led to increased risks for immunocompromised students, students being left in the dark as Disability Services scramble to figure out what accommodations they are allowed to give, & the university changing policies after several days of their announcement due to organized backlash. Will you include an investigation on how the university considers the impacts of students with disabilities when it makes its campus policy decisions?**

Yes. I think that when any university is creating policies for their students, they must think about the entire student body. An audit of the experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities and/or the Office of Disability Services would enable decision makers and students to fully understand where students are being best served, what gaps exist, and what resourcing or processes need improvement at the University level to ensure all students have equal access to safe, rewarding, and educational experiences on campus.

- 5. After March 31st, 2022, Governor Baker closed all of the COVID testing locations in Western Mass outside of Springfield, leaving many seniors, college students, & people in rural communities without access to testing. How will you use the powers of the State Auditor to make sure there is equal & ready access to COVID tests, & to assess our COVID readiness for future waves?**

As auditor, it will be instructive to conduct audits on many aspects of our COVID response, both in terms of having a full understanding of what all happened in the heat of a crisis, in the long slog of managing a multi-year catastrophe, as well as to learn what is working well and what is working poorly in our State government. The pandemic highlighted deep inequities in our society that should prompt an all-of-government response. We must reflect on what we learned and be willing to change business-as-usual in all areas of public policy that intersect with public health -- from transportation to education. Among the types of decisions deserving of this type of evaluation are those about the location and operation of testing centers; given the ongoing nature of the COVID pandemic, the results of such an evaluation should also produce actionable immediate recommendations for continued testing.

- 6. If the legislature fails to act, will you publicly call on the Secretary of the Commonwealth to implement election day voting registration?**

Yes

**7. How can the office of the Auditor use audits and reports to obviate cost-based objections to implementing pro-voter reforms, such as election day voter registration, and other policies that have been successfully implemented in other states?**

When I worked on elections in New Hampshire over multiple campaigns, I helped voters utilize their rights to Same Day Registration and saw the substantial benefits it brought to voters directly.

That said, I understand that municipal clerks have expressed concerns about how to implement this reform, including differing suggestions about the period between day 20 and Election Day and registration on Election Day itself. We need to reduce the bureaucratic burden on voters to enable easier access to the polls but we need to hear from and work with the Clerks responsible for elections so as not to add additional bureaucratic burden to their already understaffed, underfunded, and far too often ignored offices. Case studies and other investigations into the concerns raised by Clerks can help to identify a clear path toward supporting easier and expanded voting. As the head of the Division of Local Mandates, the Auditor's Office has an important role to play in this conversation. I look forward to being an active partner and to working to get this done with a solution that works for all parties and that gets Massachusetts election day voter registration, and other policies that expand and protect access to voting.

**8. Too often we see adults with disabilities being taken advantage of financially by public housing, rep payees, and by people they should be able to trust in shared living situations. How do you plan to combat financial exploitation of disabled residents by private actors and immiseration by state policies?**

The Auditor's job is to make sure state government is working well for everyone. But the Auditor must pay special attention to those in marginalized populations, who may disproportionately be victims of illicit activity or disproportionately harmed by ineffective policies and government administration. As Auditor, I will work with disabled adults and their allies to shine a light on any private actors or state policies that are failing adults with disabilities.

**9. What training do you have in accounting or auditing?**

I hold an MBA, and am the only candidate in this race with a degree relevant to the role of State Auditor. I am also the only candidate with experience working in the executive branch of state government, which is the focus of the Auditor's work.

As the Chief Accountability Officer for state government in Massachusetts, the Auditor must be someone who is independent, who has experience working in state government, and who has stood up to powerful special interests to protect taxpayers and the public interest. The Auditor must be the public face of accountability and good government for all of the Commonwealth. My career has been dedicated to serving the interests of the people of Massachusetts, and I have a strong track record of standing up to powerful business interests.

I served as Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Governor Deval Patrick, where I co-founded the MassDOT open-data program, which launched smartphone applications that tell you when your bus or train is going to arrive, saving taxpayers and farepayers millions compared with more costly and cumbersome alternatives. We made the MBTA the first transit agency on the entire East Coast to make those apps available to riders and received national attention in the Wall Street Journal and on NPR by making the MBTA a leader on real-time information.

My leadership of the No Boston Olympics effort saved taxpayers billions of dollars in Olympic cost overruns. Our grassroots campaign drew significant public attention to the possibilities of extreme waste associated and perverse incentives associated with a bid for the Olympics. The Boston 2024 proposal,

pushed by powerful, connected special interests and supported by many of the Commonwealth's most influential elected officials, would have required all of us as state taxpayers to cover all Olympic cost overruns. The risks and costs associated with Olympic bids are well-documented, but it is easy for a community to get caught up in Olympic gold fever, especially when the boosters of the games show off glossy images of gleaming Olympic venues, and then offer promises, however hollow, about how these venues will be built without public dollars. Early polling showed that the public supported the Olympic bid. But as No Boston Olympics worked to uncover and share more data with the public, the tide turned.

Both within government and as a private citizen, I have succeeded at leading teams that have improved our Commonwealth. This has meant digging into and understanding the details of public policy, because the details matter in our finances and the services we deliver.

**10. Do you pledge not to accept contributions from large developers or other real estate interests during your campaign?**

No.

**11. The cost of housing is one of the main factors in the increasing & unaffordable cost of going to college. At UMass Amherst, the cost of dorm housing makes up nearly 50% of the University's bill. This is because UMass doesn't have enough dorm units to house its student population and it is set to roughly the market rate of an apartment in Amherst. How will you use the tools of the Office of the State Auditor to see how housing shortages in college towns are making higher education unaffordable?**

Audits of the UMass system must include the full set of commitments we make to students, including establishing and measuring goals in residential life and housing options.

More broadly, as housing challenges do not end at graduation, I will also use the Auditor's Office to audit affordable and subsidized housing programs to see how to provide higher quality and more consistent options to students in need. Similarly, I will review the Department of Housing and Community Development guidelines in regard to zoning near MBTA stations for multifamily homes and the Chapter 40B process to see if it is possible to make housing more affordable for young and new renters and buyers.

I have a long and established track record of supporting pro-housing policies in my hometown. This includes supporting every 40B proposed in Brookline since I became a Town Meeting Member in 2012, including a 40B proposal at the end of the street on which I grew up. In addition, I have worked to establish zoning to promote affordable housing, reduce parking minimums, worked with petitioners on warrant articles to lead to more equitable and affordable housing, and supported the grassroots political efforts of groups like Brookline for Everyone.

These positions have not always been popular, but I believe they were the right thing to do, and I am proud to call myself a champion for more equitable housing policy in my own community and across the Commonwealth.

I believe we need significantly more housing production to address the housing crisis and to make housing more affordable. This means more "capital A" Affordable Housing, more affordable student-housing, more senior housing, more market-rate housing, and more. We need an all-hands-on-deck approach to the housing crisis.

**12. Will you refuse contributions from police or correctional officer unions or benevolent associations?**

No Position.

**13. Will you pledge to hold at least one (1) town hall each year with incarcerated persons in Massachusetts?**

Yes.

**14. Is your campaign hiring process friendly and otherwise accessible to formerly incarcerated people? And will that be the case with your administration, if elected?**

Yes.

**15. The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls is working to stop the building of a new women's prison to replace MCI Framingham. As the Senate favorably reported S.2030 out of committee, will you support shifting that \$50 million prison building budget into community-led initiatives?**

Yes.

**16. Do you support Rep. Lewis & Sen. Cyr's RIGHTS Act (H.2484/S.1566) to guarantee health, treatment, and safety for incarcerated LGBTQ+ People?**

Yes.

**17. The Pressley Policy Pledge covers bills including student debt cancellation, ending expulsion and incarceration of Black girls, and a federal jobs guarantee, among other issues. Have you taken the Pressley Policy Pledge?**

Yes.

**18. How can your office use audits and reports to support policies that combat over policing of communities of color?**

As a state official, my most significant police oversight is over the Massachusetts State Police. I released a plan for a [15-point audit of the MSP](#) which includes specific points related to complaints about bias and disproportionate enforcement as well as racial disparities in stops and arrests.

Reports such as those by John Linder and Associates in 1996 make clear that current problems at the State Police go back decades and go beyond a few bad apples or actors. The agency needs more structural change and reform if it is to live up to the high standards we should have for New England's largest law-enforcement agency.

The MSP didn't get to this place on its own. At each step, government officials responsible for providing oversight and accountability of MSP's operations and culture failed to do their jobs. In the absence of sufficient leadership from Beacon Hill or MSP management, the Auditor's Office must look at where the MSP's systems have failed our communities, taxpayers, and troopers themselves. My fifteen targeted components of my plan to audit the MSP audit are essential steps on the MSP's path to reform and cultural change that we know is needed.

As State Auditor, I will conduct a targeted audit of the State Police, with 15 key areas of evaluation and review including, but not limited to, reviews of supervision and accountability systems, administrative controls in payroll and human resources management, assessments of training and promotion criteria and systems, and inquiry into organizational support for the physical, mental, and emotional health of personnel. This proposal highlights the key role that I will play in reforming the Massachusetts State Police to make it more transparent, more accountable, and more responsive.

**19. Public four-year colleges and universities graduate Black (63.5%) and Latinx (64.6%) students at a lower rate than white students (77.6%). How can the office of the Auditor use audits and reports to advance a more equitable higher education system?**

Our public colleges and universities should be actively working to close that gap, and the Auditor's Office can assess where those policies are falling short. But we must recognize that that gap exists not simply because of the policies of our colleges and universities, but because of inequitable policies across many areas of local, state, and federal government. I am a systems thinker, and we are only going to reform these fundamental inequities when we think systemically. That's the perspective I will bring as the next State Auditor, and I am committed to using the office to shine a light on where state government isn't working and isn't effectively serving everyone.

**20. What strategies do you support to invest in communities of color so as to remedy the history of systemic under-investment?**

State government must lead by example, and the Auditor's Office has an important role to play in showing where state government is falling short of our goals for ensuring that our public dollars are making it back to communities across the commonwealth and that state government is working with vendors who reflect the full diversity of the Commonwealth. The well-regarded Massport model deserves further support and piloting across other areas of state government. Those working inside of government must also listen to those outside of government -- from BECMA, to the NAACP, to labor unions -- who are advocating for addressing historic underinvestment.

**21. Regulatory processes shape how much information the public receives about the conditions incarcerated people face in their confinement. How can you use existing policies to bring more transparency to our prisons and jails, and what further transparency rules would you advocate for?**

The Office of the State Auditor is about making state government work better and standing up to protect the public interest. When we spend on incarceration instead of investing in reducing recidivism, we are getting the worst of all worlds: poor use of taxpayer dollars, higher rates of crime, and an unjust system that is especially unjust for people and communities of color.

As Auditor, I will partner with advocates and institutions who have been on the front lines of reforming our criminal justice and corrections systems, and seek ways to communicate to the broader public that change isn't just possible and desirable, it is necessary. Together, we can make a strong case that continued reform of our system to make it more humane will also make it more effective.

**22. Regulatory processes determine whether incarcerated people can maintain contact with their loved ones, how much taxpayer money is spent on their care, how much taxpayer money is transferred directly to them, and how much they are paid for their labor. How can your office expose how incarcerated people are financially exploited by the Commonwealth via sub minimum wage rules and private contractors?**

Incarceration does not eliminate a human being's right to dignity and to be treated humanely. As stated above, when we spend on incarceration instead of investing in reducing recidivism, we are getting the worst of all worlds: poor use of taxpayer dollars, higher rates of crime, and an unjust system that is especially unjust for people and communities of color.

High priced monopolies for services to imprisoned people do not serve any public safety need but seek to make extreme profit from people with no ability to exercise market power and further appear to be designed as a method for further punishment for its own sake.

As with all cases of private firms receiving a government subsidy (in this case, the right to a monopoly without sufficient oversight), the subsidy should be publicized and the public benefits and costs (including the costs to those incarcerated) should be documented. I will undertake a review of these services and conditions as State Auditor.

**23. Massachusetts' prisons are overcrowded, provide sub-standard medical and mental health care for inmates, and do not provide enough material support for incarcerated people re-entering their communities, where they still face obstacles to accessing public services and private employment. What will you do to address these problems?**

As noted above, a just and humane system cannot be one that withholds medical care or other rights at its gates. Reform of the system requires treating imprisoned people with dignity, including sufficient medical and mental health care. Aside from the moral justification, any incarceration system that seeks to find space for self-reflection, self-improvement, and restorative justice will have better results when those incarcerated are in physical and mental shape to do so and to maintain their health after release.

Re-entry is one of many areas where the increased focus on program evaluation within the Auditor's office will be to the Commonwealth's benefit. We need to compare different interventions and support services, and be willing to adopt best practices from the rest of the country and the world. Consequently, both the departments responsible for these programs and the Auditor's office must set clear definitions of success, identify metrics that would enable measurement against those definitions, and be willing to adjust or discontinue programs that are not meeting our needs.

As Auditor, I intend for my office to be a resource for State agencies looking to conduct self-evaluations in addition to the office's official audits. This is an important cultural change as it requires an open mind to change course and to abandon instincts to treat a "failed" program as a personal or professional failure. When we can acknowledge these are difficult problems to solve and that many of our attempts may not succeed, no matter how well-intentioned, we can work together to improve the efficacy of state programs and deliver the greatest benefit to the public.

**24. What are your goals for expanding non-English materials and engagement for our immigrant communities? What community groups do you intend to work with to make your office more accessible to immigrants and more responsive to their needs?**

The auditor needs to be a watchdog for all residents of Massachusetts, this especially includes communities at higher risk of being left behind due to language and/or cultural barriers. While mass.gov provides automatic translation to many languages, professional translations and the ability to address the government in one's native language varies. As Auditor, I will ensure that audits of program effectiveness include measures to ensure agencies and departments can reach all Massachusetts residents, not just those who natively speak English.

As the Director of the Transportation for Massachusetts advocacy coalition, I worked with member groups serving immigrant communities across the Commonwealth, including Chelsea GreenRoots, Alternatives for Community and Environment, Berkshire Interfaith Organizing, the Coalition for Social Justice, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, Springfield Partners for Community Action, and many more. I will build on these partnerships while also reaching out to the dozens of other community groups that represent and support immigrant communities.

**25. What will you do to help build the broader Left and Our Revolution, specifically? For example, OR-Endorsee Rep. Pressley has campaigned for OR candidates within and outside MA, held local constituent meetings on GND policies, and collaborated with other leaders to pressure the President on student debt cancellation.**

I have campaigned for Democratic candidates in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Nevada, Georgia, and California. I look forward to supporting many candidates as State Auditor, including candidates endorsed by Our Revolution.

**26. Use this optional space to elaborate or explain your responses, and to make any statements as to why your campaign should be endorsed.**

I would be honored to receive ORMA's endorsement. ORMA would be joining other progressive organizations that have endorsed my Scandidacy, including Progressive Massachusetts (78% of the vote of their members) and Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts (91% of the vote of their members). In this race, it is important for progressive organizations to review records, and not just the rhetoric that might be shared on the campaign trail. I am the only candidate in this race with a consistent track record of holding, promoting, and voting for progressive positions on transgender rights, gun control, police reform, road safety for undocumented drivers, the social safety net, tax policy, and any number of other important areas of public policy. We can build a stronger, more equitable Commonwealth together, but we can only do that when we elect leaders who share our values. I am the only candidate in this race with the experience, the background, and a progressive track record who can be an ally to ORMA in its fight for a better future.