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## Biographical Question

1. *What can you tell us about yourself? Please include a brief outline of your relevant experience, whether from private or public life – including public offices held, and volunteer work.*

I was born and raised in Lexington and graduated from Lexington High School in 1999. My wife and I just celebrated our 10-year wedding anniversary. Together, we have 2 young children who will go to the same schools I did: an 8-year-old daughter who is at Bowman, and a 4-year-old son who is in pre-school. I am uniquely qualified to serve my community at the State House because I have spent my educational and professional life learning and practicing how to draft and pass effective legislation. I earned a Bachelor's Degree from Brandeis University with a dual major in Politics and Sociology. I additionally hold a Master's Degree from Harvard with a concentration in Government. In May, I completed a PhD in Political Science at Northeastern University, having written a dissertation focusing on cyber-security policy. I have worked at all levels of government. My first job was at the local level, when I worked in the Lexington Town Managers Office. In this job I was able to see the impact state laws could have on local communities. I worked as a staffer for the Massachusetts Democratic Party and helped ensure the success of forward looking candidates for office. At the federal level, I worked in Senator Ted Kennedy's Boston office, assisting the staff on both foreign and domestic policy matters.

At the state level, I have recent, in-depth experiences gained from having worked over 7 years at the MA State House as a Research and Budget Director. I have done all the aspects of this job – I have met with community members to identify needs, drafted and passed major legislation, evaluated budgets and defended budget priorities, performed committee and district work, and I have provided constituent services. I know the ins and outs of this job. I have built consensus with people across the political spectrum, among Democrats and with Republicans. I have worked effectively with many representatives, including the current Speaker of the House, and with the Governor's office under Democrats and Republicans. I have stood up to special interest groups. I worked around roadblocks to get new policies implemented within and outside of the traditional legislative process. These are not skills you can learn elsewhere. While my work at the Local and Federal levels provided great experiences, they provided me with different skills than those I needed at the State House, where the rules, procedures, and personalities are very different from those at the other levels. The skills I gained working at the State House can take years to learn, but I will be ready to work successfully for our District from the start.

I am committed to using my experiences to serve my community by enacting policies that will help everyone in our district and our Commonwealth. I care deeply for our district and its citizens and will reach out to everyone in our community to hear your needs. I will fight every day to see that all our residents have the benefits you and all our families deserve: high quality educational opportunities, strong government services and public safety, living wages, equal pay for equal work, healthcare access, and a healthy environment. I want to put my experience to work for our district.

## Candidate Platform

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### *2. Why are you running for State House?*

Deciding to run for office is a difficult decision to make. I am thankful to my wife and family for supporting me in this process. I could not do it without them. I decided to run for a few reasons. One is that, I want to leave the world a better place than I found it so that all our children can have a better future. I firmly believe that we all have ways to give back to our communities, no matter one's background and expertise. What I know how to do, and do well, is learn about issues, listen to others, and use that knowledge to write and pass effective legislation and policy.

I want to show people that in these dark and divided times, government can still be a beacon of good. No matter what happens in this race, I know some good has already come of my effort. My daughter has been collecting signatures so that she, Brianna Cohen, can be our first female President. I keep saying I hope we get one before then, as she is only 8!

Following the 2016 election, I saw the wave of young, first-time candidates with new ideas running for office. I want to help bring new ideas and a new forward-looking vision to government. We need new ideas and new energy. I want to be part of the next generation of leaders who move us forward in our fight to make the world a better place. I hope this district will want to be a part of that movement as well.

I am running because I believe we need a Representative with experience and knowledge of policy issues. Whoever wins this race will not have the power that Representative Kaufman does. It takes years to make connections and learn the procedures necessary to be truly effective at the State House. Thanks to my experience at the State House, I have already gone through this learning process. I know the procedures and the people. Additionally, I have a strong understanding of the issues facing our district and our Commonwealth, and of how to address them. I was the first candidate to offer policy statements, and the only one to provide them on the day I announced my candidacy so that everyone would always know where I stand on the issues. In the end, I am running because I have the experience, the vision, and passion to get this job done right, and from my first day in office. I have the courage to stand firm for what we believe in, while effectively working with others to get legislation passed. I can be a powerful and effective voice for this district and what we stand for.

## Policy Questions

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3. *What are the largest three challenges Woburn and Lexington face over the next few years, and what can you do in the State House to address them?*

I believe the three most important issues facing our district are education, the economy, and the environment. Regarding primary school education, I want to see a reduction, if not elimination, of the role standardized testing plays in the system. More control over the classroom should be given to teachers and the local community. A big part of what limits teacher creativity now is standardized testing. Teachers have to “teach to the test” to make sure students do well on it, leaving little room for innovative approaches or other topics. During the campaign, I met with one of my elementary school teachers, who still lives in Lexington. He was an amazing teacher in part because he had real flexibility to teach interesting topics and teach them in creative and appealing ways. I want to see teachers able to do what he did. Relatedly, we need increased support for vocational schools and alternative education options as not every student is best served in a traditional classroom environment. I also want to see the Commonwealth help districts across Massachusetts improve. Funding for higher education and job training programs must be increased so that more students can have access to a college education.

A second issue of importance is the economy. We need an economy that works for everyone. The last time we saw income inequality at this level was right before the Great Depression. We can address this problem without extreme and disruptive changes that will threaten the foundation of our economy. We need to ensure that the minimum wage is always a living wage. We need to address wage theft. Too many times employees are not paid a fair rate, or paid at all, for their hard work. If you put in a hard day of work, you should be paid a fair wage that you can live on. I am a supporter of unions and I will never restrict collective bargaining rights. Unions may not be perfect, but it is critical that workers have the right to defend their interests, and often they cannot do so effectively without a union. We need to enforce the Pacheco Law which blocks privatization of government services unless a private company provides better service for less money and pays workers at least the same amount as the state does. We need to make taxes fairer and ensure that the burden of maintaining society does not fall mainly on those who can least afford it. To that end I will work hard to draft a new version of the Fair Share Amendment. I also want to help limit the increases in health insurance premiums and medication costs. They are rising far faster than inflation, but we are not being provided with additional care or coverage.

Lastly, all of this is meaningless if we do not have somewhere to live: we need a healthy environment. Thus, I will be a strong proponent of environmental protections and programs. We need to greatly increase access to alternative energy. Massachusetts, with its many strong academic and commercial innovators and entrepreneurs, is ideally situated to lead in utilizing current and developing new alternative energies. We need to lift the cap on net metering, ensure all homes get an energy audit at sale, create incentives for construction of energy efficient buildings, and make it easier for individuals, towns, and cities to build and use alternative energy options. We also need to improve public transportation (which is also an economic issue). Relatedly, we need to build roads that are safer for bikers. To effectively fight climate change, we need to implement known solutions now and foster the design and testing of new approaches. As is done in biotechnology, we should support academic and commercial research so that we can become the hub of clean energy.

4. *Lexington is in process of renovating two middle schools, building a new Hastings school, a new preschool facility, and a new fire station. The town is planning to renovate and expand the police station and will soon need either a renovated or a new high school. These projects are necessary to replace old infrastructure. At the same time, the projects result in significantly higher local taxes, approved by voters through several debt exclusion referenda.*

*What do you propose to do, in the State Legislature, to reduce municipal construction costs – as well as to relieve some of the tax pressure on those least able to pay, for example people living on fixed income such as retirees living on Social Security?*

The Commonwealth offers services and tools to municipalities to help them reduce their costs when taking on these projects. I would work closely with groups like the Massachusetts School Building Authority to secure as much state funding as I could for these types of infrastructure projects. Legislation that would open up new state revenue sources for local communities is also worthwhile to reduce costs for towns and cities.

Part of what drives up property taxes is that the state places many mandates on schools, but these mandates are often left unfunded or underfunded. This puts the burden back on the communities to pay for programs that might not be necessary or desired by the local communities. I would be reluctant to support legislation that raises costs on local communities if the state does not offset the costs.

I will advocate, as Representative Kaufman has, for programs such as the local tax exemptions programs currently available to people on a fixed income. This includes: The Senior Tax Deferral program and the Senior Service Program (Lexington) and Senior Citizen Property Work-off Program (Woburn) and the State Senior Circuit Breaker program which provide qualifying seniors with much needed relief. We need to ensure people are not pushed out of the district because they can no longer afford to live here.

5. *Zoning that facilitates more balanced housing and more affordable housing has the benefit of reducing the high cost of housing and improving the socio-economic diversity of our community. At the same time, more housing means more traffic and an increase in school population that translates into additional pressure on local budgets.*

*What are your principles in regards to zoning – and what do you plan to do to advance your principles?*

I believe that zoning laws should allow towns and cities to determine how they want their community to be structured and function. The character of a community should not be determined by the state outside of extreme circumstances. I am also a strong supporter of greater socio-economic diversity in our district, as well as all other forms of diversity. This town has disproportionately few lower income, Black, or Hispanic residents among other groups. I want my children to know and play with people of all backgrounds. We need to expand the availability of affordable housing. The term “affordable housing” is somewhat misleading in regards to communities like Lexington. Who qualifies for affordable housing is determined by Chapter 40B of the General Laws, which states, in short, that people who make less than 80% of the median income qualify for affordable housing. Thus, often this housing is not really for people who are low-income.

A major problem is that communities under 40B need to have at least 10% of their housing qualify as affordable housing. Lexington is at roughly 10%, but around 8 in 10 communities do not get to 10%. In such a community, contractors are able to bypass local zoning requirements as long as the community is under 10% and the proposed project will be at least 25% affordable. This allows contractors to abuse the system to profit themselves at the expense of the local communities concerns. Large apartment complexes can be constructed that have significant impacts on the local community without the community’s permission and without concern for school and road overcrowding or the character of a neighborhood. This, not surprisingly, leads to a great deal of stress on those communities and resentment towards affordable housing.

If we want the Commonwealth to grow and be successful economically, we need to be sure people can afford to live here. However, we cannot do so by disregarding the concerns of local communities. Some communities below the 10% threshold have worked with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development on long term plans to increase affordable housing, which then gives the communities greater ability to block contractors seeking to circumvent local zoning laws. I see three important first steps in addressing this. One is that we need to revise 40B, as the current provisions are not working. We need to ensure that affordable housing becomes more available, while providing communities with greater protections against projects that would be disruptive. The second step should be to make it easier for communities to rezone their communities. Currently re-zoning requires a two-thirds vote of the local legislative body. I support the proposal to reduce that to a majority vote in the legislative body. This will make it easier for towns to rezone areas for affordable housing, smart growth, commercial, mixed use, and more, including increasing conservation land, which can help keep a community livable. Finally, the third step is to better fund the Community Preservation Act (CPA). The CPA provides money from the state to local communities for land conservation, recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The state matches just 17% of what local communities spend, which is significantly less than in the past. Boosting that rate can help promote affordable housing as well as conservation.

6. *Transgender rights: A November 2018 ballot question seeks to repeal the protection of transgender people in public places – including medical facilities, restaurants, retail shops, and bathrooms. What have you done, and will do to advance transgender non-discrimination?*

Love is love, and no one should ever have their rights restricted because of who they were born as. It is tragic that we are still fighting for equality and freedom for all minorities. I am a dedicated and fearless supporter of equality for our LBGTQ+ neighbors, and for all peoples who are fighting for equal rights. I am very proud to have been the first candidate to call on my supporters to defend transgender rights and vote YES in order to defeat the MA ballot question reversing gains in transgender rights. Not all candidates have posted their positions on this issue.

I have been engaged in supporting LBGTQ+ since high school. Following the brutal murder of Matthew Sheppard, I worked hard to fight for LBGTQ+ rights. I organized an after school group that was dedicated to this effort (as well as other Democratic causes), and recruited many of my fellow students to join this cause. If elected, I will work closely with LBGTQ+ advocacy groups in Lexington, around our Commonwealth, and around the country to push for the Legislature to do everything we can to protect and expand LBGTQ+ rights. I will be a powerful voice on Beacon Hill to defend the rights of all residents of the Commonwealth. We must live up to that name: Commonwealth. Defending minority rights is deeply personal to me as my family has experienced what it is like to be different. My family learned this firsthand as my grandmother fled Europe at the advance of the

Nazis; her relatives who stayed did not survive. This is a clear lesson for everyone: restricting rights and freedoms based on who people are is NEVER acceptable. No one should have to live in fear.

I stand with all people who want to increase respect, love, and freedom in our world. I always have and I always will.

7. *Job growth and economic development: What will you do to advance the state's economic interests, while addressing wealth and income inequality, given that Massachusetts has the 6<sup>th</sup> worst income inequality in the union?*

I believe strongly in building an economy that works for everyone. Currently, the economy is not working for those outside the very top. The last time income inequality in the United States was at the level we see today was during the lead up to the Great Depression. We need to address this problem now. Part of doing so is ensuring that we raise the rate of taxation on capital gains. This step would ensure a much more equitable tax system, as it would be more reflective of the fact that more and more of the wealthiest Americans make the majority of their income on capital gains, while most of those in the middle and lower-income brackets make little to nothing off capital gains.

I am a strong supporter of unions and the right of workers to collectively bargain. History has shown that without unions, workers have been abused, income inequality rises, and greed has led to economic collapses. Unions are not perfect, but it is critical that workers have the right to defend their interests and often they cannot do so effectively without a union. I have seen this firsthand. I have worked as an adjunct professor and was recently a graduate student, and we are generally paid a fraction of what a school would have to pay a full-time professor for the same work. I know firsthand the struggle of contingent and part-time workers. I will never vote to restrict collective bargaining rights. I am additionally pleased that Massachusetts has raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and I strongly support ensuring the minimum wage remains a living wage, by mandating cost of living adjustments. We have to prevent all forms of wage theft. Too often, employees are not paid a fair rate, or paid at all, for their work. If you put in a hard day of work, you should be paid a fair wage you can live on. An important step will be to ensure enforcement of the Pacheco Law which blocks privatization of government services unless a private company provides better service for less money and pays workers at least the same amount as the state does. This is a valuable tool to protect workers and taxpayers.

There are other steps we can take. We must focus on innovation. Massachusetts has the right combination of highly trained residents, the best colleges and universities in the world, and a dynamic private sector. The government should do its part. Massachusetts used to lead the country in innovative lawmaking and support for innovative projects. We have fallen behind. The government needs to match the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of our residents. Clean energy and solutions to mitigate climate change are areas where Massachusetts could quickly become a world leader. The Commonwealth should also offer extensive job training programs for workers who find themselves unemployed, or underemployed, and for residents more generally, so that everyone can gain skills necessary for higher paying jobs. All of these initiatives can pay for themselves. Income inequality, sadly, is also driven by discrimination. Minority workers, in particular, people of color, earn less than white workers do for the same work, and systemic discrimination makes it difficult for them to become middle or high-income earners. Women face discrimination, as well, and earn less for the same work than men. This is unfair and unsustainable if we want a vibrant economy and successful country.

8. *Transportation is a major producer of greenhouse gasses (GHG) and consumer of fossil fuel energy sources. What is your philosophy for producing an effective transportation system that is environmentally and financially sustainable?*

A core component of my platform is to improve public transportation. While this will likely be a long and difficult fight, it is well worth undertaking. Transportation emissions account for roughly 40% of the Commonwealth's pollution. The more people who use public transportation, the fewer the cars on the road, and thus the lower the level of greenhouse gas emissions. This is also a win for commuters who drive, as it will decrease congestion on the roads. When the MBTA is unreliable or does not have a route to take people where they need to go, that harms not just the environment, but families and the economy as well. Many people rely on public transportation to get to work or take their children to day care. Poor transportation systems also make it harder for people to live where they wish. It is therefore also a basic question of fairness to ensure that public transportation is reliable.

I have spoken with many people in Lexington and Woburn who want to use the MBTA, but service does not exist to take them where they need to go. To this end, I want to see an expansion of MBTA service. It current takes roughly 2 hours to get from Lexington to Woburn on the MBTA as there is no direct route. This should not be. I want to see more routes and improved services, and I do not want to raise the price of riding the T, which will mainly harm those who can least afford it. Rather, MBTA revenues will rise if there are more riders, not higher fees. I also want to see an expansion of the Last Mile program to help people get from an MBTA stop to their homes. We need to ensure that there is adequate and affordable parking at MBTA stations so that people can drive to the stop and take the T for the final leg of the commute. All of this will increase the number of riders. We also need to continue to address the mismanagement at the MBTA. The MBTA should also switch to a cleaner electric fleet of vehicles as soon as possible to amplify the environmental benefits.

One important additional step the Legislature can take is to pass legislation making it easier for neighboring communities to establish joint local levies that are focused on transportation and infrastructure projects, subject to local approval by all communities involved. This would, for instance, make it easier for Lexington and Woburn to create a joint transportation system between themselves and among other local communities without relying on the state to do it for them. We must also be honest; public transportation systems are unlikely to pay for themselves in their entirety, and the government will need to continue to provide funds to keep them functioning. While we should try to bring in as much money as possible from the public transit system, the government needs to fill the gaps. This is an issue of basic fairness and the future livability of our planet. Finally, we cannot forget road designs and bike lanes. We need to design our roadways so that drivers spend as little time as possible idling. We also need to ensure that bikers are well protected on the roads. Boston, Cambridge, and other cities have begun to do so and we need to expand those efforts. This will be a win for the environment and public health.

9. *Renewable energy production is essential to meeting Massachusetts' commitments to GHG reduction, yet recent rate structure proposed by investor owned utilities threatened to make municipal and residential installations financially impractical. What is your approach to creating incentives for renewable energy production that are not rendered moot by actions of the DPU?*

One good way to do so is to require the meeting of environmental goals (the Senate has passed legislation that would do this, but it is awaiting a vote in the House). The Commonwealth should raise the so-called Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which sets the floor for the amount of clean

energy that private utilities (such as Eversource or National Grid) are required to purchase and deliver to consumers. In 2017, the RPS was just 12%, and it is legislated to increase by 1% a year. The Senate bill would increase it by 3%. Massachusetts was once a leader in this regard, but we have fallen well behind other states. In my conversations with environmental groups, the general consensus is to require roughly 50% by 2030 with steady increases along the way and after 2030. I would prefer to go higher. A related issue is that, currently local and publicly owned utilities are exempt from the RPS. This means that there is no requirement that they provide any clean energy to consumers. I will push for legislation to include publicly owned utilities.

We need to make it easier for consumers to take advantage of alternative energy. Solar panels on buildings generate electricity, but consumers cannot store the energy they are producing. This should change. A critical step is to lift the cap on so-called net metering, which, in short, allows customers to offset their energy use and transfer energy back to the electric companies in exchange for a credit. This is a great way to encourage people to use more alternative energy, but progress has been slow. The Department of Public Utilities in January got rid of optional time-of-use rates, and allowed for an increase in prices to help companies offset the loss of revenue that has resulted from the increased use of alternative energy. This is a major set-back that the Legislature should address. The Commonwealth should also expand time-of-use options that allow people to pay less at times when overall demand is lower. We also need to ensure that everyone can take advantage of clean energy. Currently, homeowners reap the most benefits, and in particular, it is generally wealthy homeowners with large solar arrays. Reductions in net metering have made it harder to justify solar panels on apartment buildings, decreasing availability for those who do not own a home. Renters seeking to access community solar programs currently receive at most 60% of the benefits of solar when compared to a homeowner with a perfect roof. Relatedly, we need to make it easier for communities to develop alternative energy, and for consumers to access it.

Encouraging innovation is also critical. If we can drive down the cost of alternative energy, such as solar, wind, wave, bio, geothermal and more, it will encourage its use and reduce costs for utility companies as well. We also need to improve our metering equipment. What currently is used often cannot adequately keep track of all the relevant information, which makes it difficult to fully reap the cost savings alternative energy can provide.

*10. Buildings are another major component of energy consumption. What approach would you take to incentivize building practices that approach net-zero emissions and net-zero energy consumption?*

One can take a carrot or stick approach to this. The preferable way to handle this is to encourage companies and contractors to design net-zero projects for new constructions and renovations. This can be done in large part by offering incentives, rebates, or tax breaks. Encouraging the renovation of existing buildings this way can help ensure not only new buildings, but old ones are as environmentally friendly as possible. At the same time, we should consider a tax or fee on contractors and companies that design new buildings or renovations that are not environmentally friendly. The Legislature should also require that companies and building owners disclose how much energy they use and how much of it is from renewable sources. This might encourage companies to avoid negative publicity. In essence, we need to make sure that constructing an environmentally friendly building is less expensive than constructing something that harms the environment.

Innovation will be critical here as well. There are a lot of great efforts already underway to create net-zero buildings. Leading schools, including UMass, Harvard, and MIT have already begun to design and construct such buildings with zero carbon footprints. We need to encourage such research and



more application. In addition, zoning laws can play a major role. If local communities designate particular areas to only allow net zero buildings, it will encourage innovation and the construction of environmentally friendly structures

*11. All the Democrat candidates for Governor for Nov 2018 support single payer healthcare in Massachusetts. The state legislature, however, for many years, has instead passed measures intending to keep health care costs inflation in check using a market mechanism for private medical insurers, rather than switching to a single payer system. Many past state house candidates had single payer in their campaign platform, but the state house has not supported the measure.*

*Why do you think we have this disconnect between candidates and elected officials? Do you support Single Payer – and is Single Payer feasible in Massachusetts? If not, what are the alternatives?*

Candidates need to be honest about what they stand for and what they will do. I pledge to always tell the truth about where I stand, and to work towards what I promise. I worked on health care issues for over seven years as a Research and Budget Director at the Massachusetts State House. I am deeply passionate about expanding access to care, and I believe that access to quality health care is a basic human right. We must take steps to make that a reality. Single payer is an appealing way to achieve that. Such a system cannot be implemented immediately, as there is a great deal of resistance from leadership in the Legislature. If we move to single payer, it must be done very carefully. We need to be sure that incentives to innovate remain. I am also concerned about the government's ability to handle a single payer system. Thus, if we are able to create a single payer system, it will be critical to recruit a high-quality staff that is experienced in managing these types of systems, and to develop clear rules and guidelines for how the system will function. We will need provisions to monitor the system, identify problems and address them.

Having worked at the State House, I have seen that generally, change is incremental. Even major changes occur due to years of efforts laying the groundwork. When I worked on expanding mental health coverage, I focused on expanded care for veterans and then children before we were finally able to enact broader parity legislation that expanded care for everyone. This is an approach that would work well towards building a better health care system that guarantees access to quality care for everyone. We should create changes that lead us in that direction, and then build on those changes so that we have the right laws and people in place to make a single payer system work.

There are steps we can take along this path. We need to cap health insurance premium increases. Insurance premiums and costs to consumers have risen far faster than inflation and the general cost of living. This money has not been used to give consumers greater access to care, nor has it been used to increase the salaries of doctors or nurses. Instead, it has been used to pay for ever increasing, and unnecessary, administrative salaries and expenses. We need to control costs, and we can do this by capping the pay of executives at non-profit health care facilities, many of whom are paid outrageous amounts, with the costs passed to consumers. A valuable step would be to have the government negotiate lower rates for prescription drugs. I also want to work on legislation to expand the illnesses that insurance must cover, the length of treatment they offer, and the range of treatments they will pay for. Some initiatives live or die at the Statehouse because of lobbying by wealthy and powerful interests. Massachusetts is notable for powerful healthcare and insurance companies and lobbies. Here, transparency can help. I am committed to transparency; I am not and never will be invested directly in individual companies, including health care companies. I will work solely for the people of this district, and my decisions will never be biased by potential personal gain.

*12. The cost of higher education, whether public or private, has continued to significantly go up in the past 20 years. What do you see as the cause of that? What will you do, as legislator, to address it?*

Education is a top priority for me. We have a family tradition in higher education. My mother is a full-time professor at Framingham State University and my father is a professor at Harvard. I am a lecturer at Merrimack College where I teach political science. I have spoken on more than one occasion with students who told me of their struggles to pay for their education. If we want to foster a vibrant economy, address income inequality, lower racial disparities, and build a more equitable society, we need to provide people with affordable higher education.

I want to see reductions in the amount students must pay to attend public colleges and universities. Maryland recently made community colleges free, and I believe that we can follow that model. One of the biggest drivers of the increased costs to students at public higher education institutions is that the legislature has repeatedly cut funding. This means that the schools need to make up the lost money from students. This has impacted professors as well. While a contract has recently been agreed upon, Massachusetts state university faculty did their jobs for years without pay increases or long-term contracts. I will strongly oppose cuts to higher education, and I will fight to restore education funding that has been cut. As in healthcare, cost increases in universities have also come from massive growth in unnecessary administrative expenses. This leads to increases in costs to the system and thus to students. If we can reduce the costs to students while providing them with high quality education, it may even create enough competition for the best students that high cost private colleges will be forced to reduce their costs as well.

*13. Do you support charter schools? If no, why not? What changes, if any, do you advocate for –or have you personally advocated for in the past?*

I understand the intent, and I understand the appeal of charter schools as an idea. There is no clear evidence, however, that charter schools are better for students or society than other public schools. Further, the improvements and innovations that charter schools are supposed to have brought could all be tried within the public school system. Overall, the harms that charter schools cause appear to outweigh the benefits, if there are even benefits in practice. The evidence regarding the efficacy of charter schools is unclear. Compounding the problem, in general relatively few students have the opportunity to attend a charter school, while others are left behind. This is an unfair system. In addition, teachers at charter schools cannot effectively bargain collectively, which makes it hard for them to defend their own interests and needs as well as the needs of their students.

There is an additional problem. Charter schools are not effectively held accountable, and they often dismiss problem students to make their records look better. This makes claims of their efficacy even more doubtful. The dismissal of problem students appears to disproportionately impact minority students. This is, in reality, a problem at both charter schools and other public schools, including here in Lexington, and it contributes to systemic problems with racial discrimination. I have been honored to work on addressing disparities with some great activists here in town, and I was the only candidate to attend and speak out at School Committee meetings regarding this.

Overall, the evidence does not suggest that charter schools offer meaningfully better education than other public schools, and it is clear that there are worrying issues regarding them. Not the least of

these is that they undercut resources for other public schools. For those reasons I do not support charter schools as they currently exist. I would prefer the money be invested in the general public school system instead.

*14. Gun crime continues to be a significant issue in some inner city and gateway communities around Massachusetts - sometimes, drug or gang related. Throughout the state, we live with the risk of random mass shootings in schools, at work, or in places of worship.*

*What new gun control measures, if any, do you support at the state level?*

Virtually everyone agrees that the level of gun violence in America is unacceptably high. This point was very recently driven home, yet again, when 5 people were killed in a mass shooting at a newspaper, the Capital Gazette, in Maryland. The staggering number of school shootings is particularly tragic. Most people, including the vast majority of gun owners, believe that steps should be taken to prevent these avoidable tragedies. The question on gun control is not about 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment rights, which must be protected. It is about where the line is drawn regarding what is reasonable, and reasonable people will differ, sometimes broadly.

I am proud to have earned the Mom's Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate distinction, meaning that they recognize that I will be an ally in the fight against gun crime. As we work towards this goal, we must recognize and respect differing opinions and learn about various options and views. We will not make progress unless we all show good faith commitment towards respecting each other's needs and views. With large numbers of people on all sides supporting action, I believe we can take further steps to reduce gun violence, and I am committed to doing what I can to advance that cause. This debate is not simple, but we must be able to review opportunities and find a common path forward.

I believe in sensible gun control measures that will ensure citizens continue to be allowed to bear arms, while also keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals and children. I support measures such as enhancing background checks, closing the gun show loophole, and I was the first candidate to propose that we enact laws related to proper storage and tracking of firearms. Responsible gun owners already store their weapons in a manner that assures people who should not have access to their weapon cannot access it. I am thrilled that the House has passed so-called red flag legislation that would temporarily allow the police to seize the gun from those deemed an imminent threat to themselves or others. Once a person is no longer a threat, the gun will be returned to the individual. Relatedly, we need to expand access to mental health services to ensure that people who need treatment get it before a problem, including violence, occurs. I worked on expanding access to such care for over 7 years at the State House, and I want to continue that effort.

*15. Will you take on any paid work in addition to State Representative? If you will continue to have other work, how will you deal with potential conflicts of interest?*

Especially in this age of Trump, it is critical that candidates and all public servants be open and forthright about their finances and potential conflicts of interest. I believe that transparency and honesty in government is critical, and I know from my door knocking and the recent town wide survey in Lexington that it matters to people in Lexington and Woburn as well. If I am honored to be chosen by the voters to represent them, I pledge that this will be my full-time job. I will have no financial conflicts of interest of any kind.

To that end, I was the first, and thus far only, candidate to post my full Statement of Financial Interest form on my website. While these are available to the public through the state, they can be challenging to obtain and most people are not aware they exist. Furthermore, when a citizen accesses a candidate's records, the candidate is notified, which often discourages people from obtaining these records. I want to make it as easy as possible for you to see that I have no conflicts of interest.

I do not own shares in any individual companies, especially companies that harm the environment or public health, such as petroleum, tobacco, or private prison companies. I never have, and I never will. This is important, because having a direct stake in a company or industry can bias how a Representative assesses legislation. It could also lead to a recusal on a vote, which would mean that on that piece of legislation our district would lack representation. You can be certain that I do not, and will not in the future, have any financial conflicts of interest. I promise, as my publication of this form demonstrates, that my only priority will be working hard for this district and fighting for our shared values. (As an important clarifying point, as I must currently make a living and plan for my future, I have a one year term contract to teach at Merrimack College. Thus, I would complete that contract in June of 2019, which will briefly overlap with the legislative session. I would not renew that contract if I win.)

*16. If elected, how will you continuously report back and seek feedback from voters?*

As I noted in the previous question, I am deeply committed to good governance and open and transparent communication with constituents. Talking with, hearing from, and learning from the people of this district is at the core of my campaign. I will make it a point to meet frequently and regularly with constituents of all backgrounds and seek their input as to what is needed. I will frequently update constituents on important issues in the legislature and where I stand on them. I will post statements on my website, write editorials to the Lexington Minuteman and Woburn Times Chronicle and Advocate, and post messages to the Lexington and Woburn list serves. I will hold regular coffee/office hours in both Lexington and Woburn. I also want to continue the Open House program that Representative Kaufman has created. When hiring staff, I will look for people dedicated first and foremost to constituent services. I will also be available to constituents via social media, including by Twitter and Facebook messenger.

It is also critical to me that people know where I stand, what I plan to do, and what I have done. I have shown this in my campaign. I was, as I noted above, the first candidate to offer policy statements, and the only one to provide them on the day I announced my candidacy, so that everyone would always know where I stand on the issues. As I have talked with people, I have expanded these statements to reflect what I have learned. I am committed to transparency and communication with voters, as my previous answer illustrates.

You can trust that I will always work hard for you and remain in close contact with you. In this campaign so far, I have been personally knocking on doors, placing the door hangers and lawn signs, responding to your emails and calls, and researching and writing my own position statements and debate answers. I know from my time at the State House that to do this job right requires someone with strong principles, but also someone who wants to hear and learn from others. It takes someone who is willing to give everything they have to it. Just as I am committed to this campaign, if elected, I will be committed to fighting for you, this district, and Massachusetts. I want to hear from everyone, and I hope you will reach out to me to learn more and get involved. I will keep working hard to earn your vote on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>.

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*All candidates are asked to limit the response to each question to at most two or three paragraphs, and to provide the questionnaire responses by end of day Sunday, July 1st, 2017. Responses will not be edited, and will run as submitted. They will be posted on [lex-wiki.org](http://lex-wiki.org) in PDF format and announced through other community media. Questionnaire coordinator Andrei Radulescu-Banu ([bitdribble@gmail.com](mailto:bitdribble@gmail.com), 617-216-8509). Questionnaire reviewer: Joe Pato.*

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