



MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee 2022 Questionnaire – State Auditor

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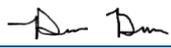
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Please submit two high-resolution photos (300 dpi at full size) — one a head-and-shoulders or full-body shot, and one action shot in an educational/community setting — with your completed questionnaire. Please ensure that your campaign has full, royalty-free 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 Auditor. 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.*

First, I want to start by thanking the Massachusetts Teachers Association and all of its members for giving me the opportunity to ask for their support in this race for Auditor. I was so proud to be endorsed by the MTA in past legislative races – and to be a passionate and loyal partner with the MTA during my decade in the Legislature – for the simple reason that my public school and college teachers, professors and advisors made me who I am today.

Born to a 17-year-old single mom, I grew up housing insecure and survived domestic violence in the home. I was blessed to have extended family and church friends who helped us out and allowed us to couch-surf or take a room in their homes when times were tough. But I was also blessed to be educated where I was, in the Methuen Public Schools. My entire childhood and adolescence were shaped by the hardworking people who not only taught me reading, writing and arithmetic, but also impressed upon me the value of being an engaged, active participant in our democracy. I wouldn't have run for public office at age 27 without first learning about the importance of government in social studies classrooms beginning in middle school. I wouldn't have understood the power and responsibility I have – that every woman has – without first learning in my history classes about the strong, courageous women who broke down so many barriers. I wouldn't have learned that science is something to be understood and trusted, not feared and ignored, without public schools.

It is because of these teachers, councilors and support staff that I graduated from Methuen Public Schools and, while waitressing and cleaning houses, was able to make my way through Middlesex Community College. I then earned a full scholarship to Wellesley College to become the first in my family to graduate. It is why I have always stood with MTA members – whether in the halls of the State House or on picket lines in and outside my district.

And it is why I am running for Auditor, to ensure that no one, no matter their background, bank balance or zip code, receives different treatment on Beacon Hill. I will use my decade-long experience in the Legislature, both in the House and the Senate where I have repeatedly demonstrated my willingness to take on the powerful Beacon Hill establishment, to fight for transparency, accountability and equity for the people of Massachusetts. To that end, my [14-point Social Justice and Equity Audit Plan](#) aims to dismantle outdated and unfair policies that continue to disproportionately harm underserved and marginalized communities. My Audit Plan lays out a number of specific priorities including greater transparency and accountability across state and local government, improving early education and care, battling climate change and increasing affordable housing.

As Auditor, I will remain a friend and partner with the MTA and its members, continuing the fight to increase access and opportunity for all children in the Commonwealth through great education, regardless of where they might live.



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**
 - 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**
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**
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**
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**
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**

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
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
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

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
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
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

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**
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**

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**
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 profits.
 - 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**
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**

SHORT ANSWERS

Please use separate sheet if more room is needed.

1. What is your assessment of our preK-12 public education system and how would you, as Auditor, use your office to support public education?

As a Senator, I was proud to support and vote for the Student Opportunity Act of 2019, which infused billions of dollars in new funding for our public schools, primarily benefiting low-income students, students of color and English language learners who have been left behind.

And while the Student Opportunity Act was an important step forward for our public schools, I know – through my six years of service on the Education Committee in the House as well as my work on education issues in the Senate – that we have much more to do. We need more educators to bring down class sizes, we need to ensure that education support professionals earn a living wage and we need to expand funding for wraparound services to support special education, adjustment counselors and school psychologists. That is why it is so important that we pass the Fair Share Amendment in November. I was proud to vote to place the question on the ballot – the fourth time that I have voted in favor of the amendment. I was also thrilled to stand with Raise Up Massachusetts at a [rally](#) in my district to be the first to publicly sign the pledge for Fair Share and urge my constituents to talk to their families, friends and neighbors to get the vote out in support of the Amendment.

We also need to continue to protect the collective bargaining rights of educators across the Commonwealth. I have actively supported MTA members both inside and outside my district when their rights have been under attack. I stood side by side with the Haverhill Public School teachers – who were the lowest paid in the Merrimack Valley – as they successfully fought for a contract that raised their pay to be more in line with other communities. I also stood with MTA members in Tewksbury, even though it was outside of my district, during their prolonged labor dispute. I have been an active supporter of the MTA's living wage campaign for paraprofessionals.

It is that level of personal commitment to educators and our public schools that I will bring to the Auditor's office. Whether it is ensuring accountability and transparency from the charter school industry, making sure that both federal and state funds dedicated to our schools are getting to where they are needed or using the powers and the bully pulpit of a state-wide elected official to protect collective bargaining rights – the members of the MTA will have an Auditor who is always in their corner.

2. What is your assessment of our public higher education system and how would you, as Auditor, use your office to support public higher education?

Public higher education in the Commonwealth has been underfunded in recent decades, and proof can be found in rising tuition costs for in-state students. It has gone from a manageable investment for working families to an unsustainable burden of lifelong debt. To help fix this inequity, I am an enthusiastic supporter and co-sponsor of the Cherish Act, which would finally implement the findings of the Higher Education Finance Commission report from 2014. I also believe the Commonwealth must commit to finally realizing the goal of debt-free, public higher education.

In addition, as a proud graduate of Middlesex Community College, I'm a living example of the value our community colleges provide to their students – and I know firsthand how they are being grossly underfunded. Professors with masters and doctorate degrees are paid a fraction of what their education and responsibilities deserve. We also need to reverse the increasing trend of underpaying and valuing adjunct faculty and create stronger career tracks for those in higher education who are dedicated to teaching our students. Education Support Professionals in higher education, like their counterparts in preK-12, are also criminally underpaid and undervalued. All educators and ESPs in public higher education should be making at least a livable wage. These investment shortfalls are yet another reason why passage of the Fair Share Amendment this November is so critical.

I will bring a unique perspective to the role of constitutional officer – as a graduate of Wellesley, a graduate of a state community college, and personification of public education's transformative power. As Auditor, I will use the office to work with the MTA to hold the Board of Higher Education and administrators at public universities and colleges more accountable. These institutions exist to serve the common good, and I am committed to working with the MTA on anything I can do as in the Auditor's office to shine a light on the increasing influence of private interests and profit-

motives. We need to ensure taxpayer money is being invested to serve our students, not to line the pockets of administrators while many of our educators and ESPs struggle to make a living.

3. As Auditor, you or your designee will be a member of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System Board. How would you view the role of you or your designee on the board?

I view my role on the MTRS Board as a vital one to help ensure a strong, solvent and fully funded, defined pension system for MTRS beneficiaries. It is a benefit they rely on and deserve, and one I will protect. I do think the MTRS can continue to make more reliable and environmentally sustainable investments without sacrificing its stability. I will work with current and former educators on the Board to listen and support their ideas on how best serve the needs of its members.

4. Currently, teachers with past membership in another public retirement system are required to "elect" into RetirementPlus (R+) within the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System (MTRS), but all other new teachers are automatically enrolled in R+. This has created confusion with some teachers being told they are in R+ only to be told later they are not. Currently, these cases go through a lengthy and costly appeals process that will continue until the issue is addressed by the Legislature. The MTA has worked closely with the MTRS on legislation to fix this issue (H.19 in the 2021-2022 session). The proposal does not represent a new benefit but rather it is a clarification of R+ membership status that may impact approximately 2,000 MTRS members. Importantly, the proposed bill does not add additional liability to the pension system. As Auditor, would you commit to working with the MTA, MTRS and legislative leaders to enact legislation to address to this issue?

Yes.

5. State law requires independent audits of charter schools that must be submitted to the Auditor, and it also gives the Auditor the authority to investigate the budgets and finances of charter schools. If elected, what steps would you take to ensure that charter schools, which are publicly-funded but privately-operated, are subject to robust financial oversight?

For the last decade in the legislature, I have stood with public school teachers to increase the oversight of charter schools. Unfortunately, there are people in this state who still believe that the answer to what ails our public schools can be found in for-profit institutions that take taxpayer money but answer only to their own boards. Schools that claim to be public schools should be accountable to the public. That is why I was a passionate and vocal advocate for the "No on 2" campaign in 2016 that successfully prevented lifting the charter school cap.

As Auditor, I will use all the powers at my disposal to ensure that the charter school industry in Massachusetts is held accountable to taxpayers.

6. State law requires that state departments, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary of Education, be subject to an audit at least once every 3 years, or as often as the Auditor determines it necessary. If elected, would you commit to ensuring that the next audit of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education include a review of the current and former contracts between the department and vendors hired to develop and/or administer standardized assessments such as MCAS?

Yes. It is critical that there be increased oversight over the standardized testing industrial complex that is reaping millions of dollars in state funding while supplying little, if any, transparency or accountability.

7. The Commonwealth has received billions of dollars in federal aid to support the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. How will you, as Auditor, ensure that federal funds, including those allocated specifically for public preK-12 and higher education, are being spent in accordance with state and federal guidelines?

We must ensure that this much-needed infusion of federal funding gets to the families and communities that need it most. Every possible step must be taken to prevent waste, fraud and abuse. This is work I already began in the legislature, co-sponsoring an amendment that would increase accountability and transparency in the expenditure of ARPA funds. (You can see my remarks from the floor debate [here](#).) It would provide a user-friendly tracking system and website through which the public may access, in near real-time, the amount and percentage, by spending category, of funds appropriated under this act

spent in communities that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. As Auditor, I will continue these efforts by actively analyzing, auditing and reporting on the expenditure of federal stimulus, ARPA and other COVID-related funding to ensure they are used effectively and efficiently.

8. 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?

Yes.

I have a long and proud history of standing up for, and alongside, organized labor in Massachusetts. Prior to being elected to the state legislature, I served as Chief of Staff for the Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts and also worked at the National Association of Government Employees. Both have endorsed my candidacy for Auditor.

In addition to the efforts I've made on behalf of MTA members as detailed above, I've led efforts alongside marginalized State House staffers in Beacon BLOC to provide more equitable compensation, and I am also the only candidate in this race to publicly support the State House Staff Union. I am a proud co-sponsor of H. 1946, An Act Protecting the Right to Strike, and I've strongly supported efforts of grassroots groups such as Raise Up Mass and labor unions such as AFT, SEIU, NAGE, IBEW, LIUNA, MNA and many others to fight for social justice and ensure workers across the Commonwealth are able to live with a standard of dignity in the communities they work so hard to serve. My support goes beyond the doors of the State House, having stood shoulder to shoulder with many rank-and-file union members on picket lines across Massachusetts, including with MTA members across the Merrimack Valley. I will continue to do so as Auditor.

My commitment to working families and the rights of organized labor is unmatched in this race. In fact, I am the only candidate to have been endorsed by organized labor, including but not limited to the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), UNITE HERE 26, IBEW Local 223, Boston Carmen's Union, Iron Workers Local 7, Machinists District 15, the MBTA Inspectors Union, Operating Engineers Local 4, the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, MNA, and Teamsters Local 170 and 25.

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

My track record in accessibility and solidarity as a legislator is a proven example of how I will approach our partnership in the Auditor's office. In fact, our relationship will only deepen. Kevin Tierney, MTA Regional Organizer for the Northeast, and Conner Bourgoin, Tewksbury Teachers Association President, can attest to how I've always been there for the MTA – sometimes alone among elected officials – when it comes to fighting for its members. As Auditor, the MTA and its members will always have a seat at the table of my administration, and it will be an open-door and open-mind policy. I look very much forward to standing with you in constitutional office, helping to support our public schools and their dedicated teachers and staff.

Thank you, once again, for your time, passion and service to our Commonwealth!

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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