

**1. Tell us about yourself and your professional background. What do you see as the responsibility of the State Auditor's Office? How does your professional experience translate to the duties of state auditor and the office you would oversee?**

Born to a 17-year-old single mom, I learned to work hard and fight for the things that mattered. A graduate of Methuen public schools, I went to Middlesex Community College and later earned a scholarship to Wellesley College.

After serving in the legislature as an aide, as Chief of Staff for the 12,000-member Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, and years of work for local nonprofits and community organizations, I won my first race for public office in 2012. I served three terms as State Representative for the 14th Essex District. In 2018, I was elected to the State Senate. I am currently in my 10th year of service as a member of the legislature.

I have spent my life – as a small businesswoman, a non-profit leader and as an elected official – fighting for everyday people. I have worked to ban the longstanding practice of powerful people using taxpayer-funded non-disclosure agreements to hide bad behavior. I have worked to hold Columbia Gas accountable for the disaster they created in the Merrimack Valley, both inside and outside of my legislative district. I have led efforts to break down barriers to a quality education regardless of zip code and stood by our small businesses every step of the way as they continue to recover from the devastation caused by the pandemic. I continue to go line by line through our state budget to ensure our communities, agencies and organizations receive fair and equitable treatment.

As a State Senator, rather than trying to work within the rules of the powerful Beacon Hill establishment, I have taken it on – fighting for increased transparency, equity, accountability and accessibility for all.

As State Auditor, our team will spend every working hour searching for, reporting on and preventing financial loss. We will work tirelessly to improve the performance of our government. We will report on what's going right and what's going wrong, so the public knows what is being done with their tax dollars. A critical priority of mine is implementing my Social

Justice and Equity Audit Plan (further detailed below), which would tackle some of Massachusetts largest challenges.

Our communities deserve a State Auditor who is not afraid to speak truth to power and who has the proven track record of standing up for what's right – even when it means standing alone.

**2. In your previous experience, have you performed or led a team to uncover any fraud, waste or abuse, and if so, what were the results? What was the scope of savings because of the investigation?**

Over the last decade, as a State Representative and a State Senator, I have a strong and public track record of holding the powerful accountable on behalf of the people of Massachusetts. As a legislator, I have prioritized ensuring appropriate transparency and oversight of our expenditures during the annual budget process to ensure that the people who need our help get it and those who abuse the system are held accountable.

I have been [leading the charge](#) on calling for greater transparency around Massachusetts' unemployment insurance (UI) trust fund. A complete financial accounting of the fund has not been done since June of last year, and a monthly financial report has been missing, with the fund showing a negative balance of \$1.77 billion. But we need more than just a financial report to ensure greater accountability within the system. Businesses are bearing the brunt of this burden, and it's imperative that our state government provide a solution as we replenish the fund. By implementing proper procedures, we could save taxpayers billions of dollars in the long-run.

In the wake of an audit that uncovered welfare abuse – where deceased individuals' social security numbers were used for fraudulent public assistance applications – I supported a comprehensive reform bill that corrected several agency oversights and inefficiencies. It allowed us to maintain our critical social safety net for families in need while at the same time reducing fraud and abuse, ultimately saving tax dollars. This was personal for me, as my mother helped raise me through the support of public assistance, and I know how much of a lifeline it was for us. This kind of fraud hurts the families who are in dire need because it undermines the general public's support for such important assistance.

I have been unafraid to [publicly decry](#) legislative rule-change in the House of Representatives that would oppress the rights of minority members and decrease the number of recorded votes.

I am committed to opening up government to the people and ensuring that we all see our stake in legislative activity.

I have also been a strong [advocate](#) for ending taxpayer-paid nondisclosure agreements throughout state government. In 2018, in a speech on the House floor, I shared my own personal experience in being silenced, breaking my own NDA to uncover abuse. This practice harms victims and ensures protection for abusers, and it has no place in our state government.

**3. As a candidate for state auditor, what do you see as the top challenge(s) facing Massachusetts? What role does the state auditor play in helping to resolve those challenges?**

Our state government is great at making promises but, too often, it fails to actually live up to those ideals. Growing up in Lawrence and Methuen, I saw first-hand the disproportionate impacts of unfair policies on underserved communities. Our policies feed a self-sustaining status quo where people with generational access to power prosper and the everyday working people are pushed aside and marginalized. I will be an Auditor who opens state government to everyone and shifts the balance of power back to the working people.

That is what my Audit Plan will accomplish – tackling some of the big challenges facing the Commonwealth while working to dismantle outdated and unfair policies that continue to disproportionately harm working class communities.

You can see the full plan [here](#), but some of the challenges it tackles include:

**Affordable Housing** - Growing up housing insecure in Lawrence and Methuen taught me that housing is one of the most basic, fundamental needs that distinguishes between families that easily succeed and those that struggle. My mom and I were lucky to have loved ones who could take us in to provide some stability in difficult times. Growing up, I was able to stay with friends or family, “couch surfing,” or taking a spare room depending on availability in their homes.

My story is not that different from the stories of many other people here in Massachusetts who are currently struggling just to find a basic, affordable place to live. We are in a housing crisis and far too many families are facing these challenges. We need to do better by those who are working hard to make ends meet, yet still struggling. As your State Auditor, I will fight to increase housing opportunities that are affordable.

I’ll actively analyze, audit, and report on the expenditure of federal stimulus, ARPA and other COVID-related funding to ensure they are used effectively and efficiently. I will work to identify the most cost-effective approaches to produce affordable housing. That will include: converting

existing housing stock to affordable; preserving existing housing that is already affordable to residents; and significantly expanding transit-oriented development.

We need to get more housing for our tax subsidies and to produce more housing that's available for families in genuine need. I will analyze the cost effectiveness of building new affordable housing as compared to purchasing existing properties and converting them into affordable housing.

Communities that fail to comply with affordable housing laws such as 40B are not eligible for funding under the Housing Choice Initiative, Local Capital Projects Fund or MassWorks Infrastructure Fund. I will report on whether or not the Commonwealth is actually enforcing these requirements. I will also study and report on the opportunity to increase housing opportunities, affordable to working families, on State land and on land owned by other public authorities such as MassPort and regional transit agencies.

**Climate Change** - It is of the utmost importance that the administration be held accountable on meeting climate goals passed through "Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy." The legislation directed state agencies to set, "interim economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions limits, as well as sector-based emissions sub-limits for certain sectors, every five years. It codifies the state's long-term emissions limit of net-zero emissions by 2050 and directs the adoption of a 2030 emissions limit of "at least 50 percent below 1990 levels," a 2040 emissions limit of, "at least 75 percent below 1990 levels." I will audit relevant state agencies to shine a light on where we are, or are not, meeting our commitments.

In addition, the Mass Save program too often benefits wealthier communities while low-income neighborhoods are overlooked and ignored. There should be accountability in ensuring equitable access to the program for underserved communities. Mass Save's stated goal is to help "residents and businesses across Massachusetts save money and energy, leading our state to a clean and energy efficient future." These are laudable goals, however, we must ensure environmental justice is not taking a backseat to the well-intentioned stated priorities of the program. The Mass Save program itself is funded through our utility payments, across the board, in Massachusetts. I will analyze and report on disparities between services provided to low-income residents and underserved communities and residents in more affluent communities.

**Early Education and Care** - The 2016-2018 audit of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) found several significant problems directly impacting children. EEC failed to review or initiate investigations into reported child abuse and neglect. It did not always conduct

background checks for those involved in caring for children, and it did not complete licensing investigations into care programs, or even visit them in a timely manner. These problems disproportionately impact lower-income communities and communities of color because of the underinvestment in affordable childcare. These failures have serious impacts on our children and need to be addressed.

This is why I have committed, as your State Auditor, that we will follow up on important audits and studies that our office does through a dedicated team that ensures accountability. Reporting on a problem is only part of the process. The most important piece is actually following through and working to turn the office's reports into systemic change. That work will be done in my office, and outcomes will be reported to the public, so they know what their public officials are doing and hold them accountable for actions or inaction.

- 4. Members of MassCPAs' Governmental Accounting and Auditing Committee work closely with Massachusetts municipalities that have received millions of dollars in additional federal funding from the federal government over the last few years. As this level of federal funding is historically unprecedented, how would your office partner with MassCPAs Governmental Accounting and Auditing Committee, municipal auditors and municipalities to ensure that compliance with all required guidelines is maintained? What are your plans to deploy adequate resources to municipalities to combat any potential waste and fraud?**

It is critical that this much-needed infusion of federal funding gets to the families and communities that need it most and that we take every step possible 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 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic.

As Auditor, I am committed to partnering with MassCPAs in this effort, creating an advisory panel of CPAs to specifically assist in crafting processes and procedures that will make sure this money is going where it's needed. As Auditor, MassCPAs will always have a seat at our table. I will work hand-in-hand with them, utilizing my 10 years of experience in the legislature to push lawmakers to ensure adequate resources that would prevent waste and fraud.

- 5. When the current state auditor took office in 2011, she was very successful in undertaking sweeping reform by removing individuals who lacked the skills and qualifications to effectively perform their duties and replaced them with individuals who did possess the skills,**

**qualifications and experience to perform these job functions. While this level of effort has been sustained, the current risk facing all employers is the lack of skilled workers who will be available to replace the aging workforce. Given the technical skills necessary to properly fulfill the duties of these positions, what is the plan to take on this significant challenge?**

I applaud Auditor Bump for the work she has done to professionalize the Office of the Auditor and ensure that staff have the skills and qualifications necessary to perform their critical duties. I am committed to building on that progress – maintaining a robust human resources department and high professional standards – focusing on **what** you know, and not **who** you know, when it comes to hiring. I am also committed to partnering with MassCPAs and others to maintain and strengthen a diverse pipeline of qualified applicants. This is crucial for me, as someone who was born and raised in a Gateway City and knows just how wide the talent pipeline really is.

- 6. The current State Auditor’s Office developed sophisticated analytics capabilities, which helped identify deficiencies in various state programs. What experience do you have that would enable you to follow through on those initiatives and progress in an ever-changing technological environment? What additional types of technological advancements do you foresee undertaking?**

I would point to my co-sponsoring of the amendment to increase accountability and transparency in the expenditure of ARPA funds as an example of how I see technology playing a role in state government. We need modern, updated methods of tracking fund disbursement and use. Our vision is to 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 ARPA and spent in communities that were disproportionately impacted by the 2019 novel coronavirus pandemic. This includes spending received by environmental justice populations or communities that score in the top half of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s social vulnerability index; a breakdown of contract and subcontract dollars awarded to diverse businesses; a breakdown of spending by zip code and statewide; and any other data or analysis necessary. Information on the website shall be made available in a machine-readable, downloadable format and through data visualization tools on the website. I believe that uncovering and updating this database is key to ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the state, and it’s a model that could be used for other projects.

- 7. How do you plan to be involved in the auditing and accounting/financial community? Are you willing to present at MassCPAs’ Government Accounting and Auditing Conference? Will you**

**designate a staff member to attend monthly MassCPAs Governmental Accounting and Auditing Committee meetings?**

As Auditor, the MassCPAs will always have a seat at the table of my administration, and I will be aggressive in ensuring that your recommendations are turned into action. I greatly value the experience and dedication to civic engagement that the members and leadership of MassCPAs bring to our shared commitment to transparency and accountability in government – this questionnaire is but one example of your dedication, and I hope it is just the start of our partnership.

Your expertise will be critical to the success of our next State Auditor. I would actively seek to include you on task forces and advisory commissions, as experts in the field. I hope to rely on you as we work to tackle Massachusetts' most urgent challenges and ensure greater transparency and accountability throughout our state agencies. Our relationship will be one of collaboration, respect and action to properly serve the people of Massachusetts. I and my staff will always have an open door and open minds when it comes to the MassCPAs and other experts, and I would be thrilled to attend conferences and meetings that will further our shared goals.