



**2022Candidate Questionnaire
Select Board/School Committee**

Candidate's Name: Amy Checkoway

Office Sought: School Committee

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The Belmont Education Association (BEA) represents nearly 525 educators, administrators, administrative assistants, and education support personnel who work in the Belmont Public Schools. In addition, there are 500 Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) members who work in other districts or are retired public school employees who live in Belmont. Our goal with this questionnaire is to educate BEA and MTA members and ensure the election of candidates who share our vision for great public schools in Belmont. As we have done in previous years, the information will be shared with members by mail and on social media- [last year's mailing](#). Please email (belmonteducationassociation@gmail.com) this questionnaire with a high-resolution headshot before **March 7th**.

Thank you.

Andy MacAulay
BEA Political Action Leader
CMS (617) 851-5622

John Sullivan
BEA President
BHS (617) 365-1073

Below are **three priority legislative bills which the BEA/MTA have endorsed**. For each statement, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the BEA's position and then elaborate briefly to clarify your position.

Fair Share Amendment

Massachusetts voters will have a once-in-a-generation opportunity in 2022 to make sure that public education gets the permanent funding it deserves. The Fair Share Amendment would change the state's Constitution to help address the chronic underfunding of our public schools, colleges and universities. The amendment would add 4 percentage points to the tax on income above \$1 million, generating up to \$2 billion annually for public education and transportation. This could lower class sizes, strength higher education programming, reduce student debt, address the impacts of systemic racism on communities of color, and restore staff to institutions that serve the common good — which have been hit hard by decades of austerity budgets. We support the passage of the Fair Share Amendment in November.

- ☒ Agree with MTA/BEA's position
☐ Disagree with MTA/BEA's position

I support the Fair Share Amendment that would create an important new revenue source for areas that have historically been underfunded in Massachusetts, including public education (including early education and care, K-12 education, and higher education) and transportation infrastructure.

MCAS Moratorium and Changes to High-Stakes Testing

An Act expanding opportunities to demonstrate academic achievement would eliminate the high-stakes nature of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and promote alternative assessment methods. *We support bills [S 293](#) and [H 612](#) because:*

- Students will have several pathways to demonstrate that they have met the mastery standard for competency determination, including passing a standardized test.
- Providing alternative pathways for special needs students to graduate.
- Including parent, student and educator surveys in the evaluation process.
- Creating the opportunity to expand the school curriculum and focus on teaching – not testing.

☒ Agree with MTA/BEA's position

☐ Disagree with MTA/BEA's position

I support eliminating the high-stakes natures of the MCAS and the development of alternative assessment methods and multiple pathways to demonstrate student mastery of key competencies in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Preparation for and administration of the MCAS can take significant time away from curriculum and other learning opportunities. I think that it is particularly important to develop assessment methods that are appropriate for students with diverse backgrounds and different learning styles.

Ensuring A Dignified Retirement

We support Passing An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits. [H.2623](#) and [S.1683](#) would mean:

- *Pension benefits are able to keep pace with inflation.*
- *Municipal retirees will have increased stability in health insurance premium payments.*
- *Retired public employees who are not eligible for Medicare will be better protected from skyrocketing health care costs.*
- *More economic stability overall for our hardworking public servants who deserve to retire with dignity*

☒ Agree with MTA/BEA's position

☐ Disagree with MTA/BEA's position

Although I am not well-versed in the specifics of this bill, I support efforts to provide retirees with greater economic stability and predictability, including capping out-of-pocket health care expenses for retirees who are not eligible for Medicare.

LOCAL ISSUES

Confronting Racism & Privilege

The union has placed a priority on confronting racism and white privilege in our schools, union, and community. Our union created Belmont Educators of Color and Allies, with a mission to Educate, Advocate, and Eliminate Racism. The group aims to educate themselves and others about the history of racism, advocate to create supportive relationships, and dismantle racism in

our schools. Last year we also partnered with the BPS to establish school and district Equity Teams that meet once a month to discuss issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.

How have you supported diversity within BPS or elsewhere and how would you work to eliminate racism in our schools?

As a School Committee member, I have served on our equity subcommittee since its inception, was a strong proponent for the creation of our new district position focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and have spoken up publicly about hate incidents in our country and our schools. Moving forward, I hope to focus more attention on efforts to diversify our district workforce and continue to shine a light on and confront racism and discrimination in our community. We now have quite a few different groups that are working on supporting diversity in Belmont, and I hope that we can work together and coordinate efforts more across groups in the coming months.

Promoting Belmont Public Schools

What are your specific plans for promoting public education in Belmont?

Now, more than ever, it is important to highlight positive things that are happening in our public schools and to rebuild trust and confidence in our school system and district leadership. I hope to collaborate with the BEA to identify opportunities to promote public education and articulate and advocate for the resources that our district needs to support all students and retain high-quality staff.

Engaging Parents and Citizens

What have you done or what will you do to engage and organize the parents and citizens in addressing the concerns associated with public education in Belmont?

I spend time every day responding to emails and calls from parents/guardians and community members about concerns associated with public education in Belmont. Last year, I participated in office hours and helped to implement a Q&A portal on the School Committee website to provide parents and community members with additional ways to share their views. As Chair, I have allowed additional time for public input at each meeting since last April. Furthermore, I try to inform parents/guardians about local meetings and discussions that impact our school system and frequently encourage community members to share their perspectives, priorities, and experiences with town and district leadership. I also share specific concerns from parents/guardians and

YOUR PRIORITIES

What are the main reasons you are running for office/re-election?

It takes a significant amount of time to get one's bearings as a School Committee member, and the Belmont School Committee has experienced quite a bit of turnover over the past 5-10 years. I hope to help provide important continuity and stability to the Committee by serving for another term. I also hope to be able to contribute my expertise in education policy and strategic advising as a School Committee member. The past two years have been highly unusual and much of our attention has been dedicated to basic operational and health and safety issues, and I look

forward to hopefully being able to look forward and engage in strategic planning for the future in the coming months.

Please specify your top three priorities you plan to address.

- 1) District reconfiguration planning and strategic visioning
- 2) Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- 3) Academic and social-emotional/mental health recovery from the pandemic

Additional Information

Please provide any additional relevant information about your candidacy that you believe the BEA should consider.

This is not about my candidacy, but I wanted to make sure to take this opportunity to communicate that I know that the pandemic has been an incredibly challenging time for educators and school staff, and am deeply appreciative of your patience, flexibility, stamina, and bravery.