



We appreciate your commitment to children and families in the Commonwealth, and we are interested in learning more about your approach to this work.

Please submit your answers to any or all of the following questions. We will share your responses with the CLM Membership only. Responses may be edited for length but will not otherwise be altered.

Kim Driscoll for Lieutenant Governor

1. How will you tackle systemic issues of poverty in the Commonwealth (particularly as they are tied to systemic racism)? What do you view as the biggest obstacles to implementing policy initiatives and securing the funding to support at-risk families, and how would you work to ensure that all families have the opportunity to thrive?

Places that have had success in advancing policies to tackle poverty and support at-risk families, have done so by bringing together stakeholders from the private, public, and non-profit sectors to reach consensus on a vision forward. As the Mayor of Salem, we have been able to engage stakeholders to achieve real policy results on a range of factors impacting poverty - including food security, housing affordability and availability, and access to reliable transportation options to connect residents with work. Government must be able and willing to implement innovative policies and practices and, if it fails, learn from that failure to constantly improve.

Creating a culture of curiosity, a continuous learning approach to delivering services, and a willingness to embrace new applications can be a powerful tool within state government. A key barrier to success at the state level has been a fear of failure which can lead to inertia and a tendency to settle for mediocrity and avoiding or deferring important decisions or actions because they're perceived as being tough or difficult. Local government doesn't have that luxury; you have to deliver for people and you have to be willing to be innovative to get things done, especially when state and federal partners don't step up. What's more, there is no hiding from your decisions in local government, especially for mayors.

State officials need to recognize that not every major investment is going to result in a ribbon cutting within four years. That doesn't mean that investment is not worthwhile. To take on the major contributors to poverty, and child poverty especially, we need to be willing and prepared to invest in big ideas, just like I've done in Salem, from robust early education and pre-K to transportation systems to more affordably link workers with jobs. I will bring that experience and vision to my role as Lt. Governor.



2. How will your work address the challenges of race equity and disproportionality in child welfare, for example, as it relates to identification/reporting of families and equitable access to services? Is there one child welfare policy initiated in another state that you would like to see Massachusetts adopt?

As the daughter of a naturalized U.S. Citizen (my Mom was born in Grenada and grew up in Trinidad) and as a committed public servant with experience working in diverse communities like Chelsea and Salem, I know firsthand the value and benefits of inclusion, diversity, and empowerment within a community setting. Connecting and including people of all backgrounds to design our policies in an intentional way helps to create thriving, livable, welcoming places that fully harness the contributions of all residents. Moreover, breaking down systemic racism within systems – from education and healthcare to criminal justice and housing – must be at the forefront of our work. I believe Massachusetts must continue to strive to be a state that welcomes and embraces all of its residents and combats prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, especially on the systemic and institutional level. To that end, as Mayor I have worked on the following:

- *Hiring of the City's First Latino Affairs Coordinator – a full-time position that reports directly to the Mayor's office, which serves to break down barriers and work directly with members of our Latinx community on programs and initiatives.*
- *Increasing the number of Spanish speaking Police Officers and Firefighters in Salem by requesting special permission from the State Civil Service Commission to obtain a special preference for Spanish speaking applicants.*
- *Open up the process for appointing Board and Commission positions in order to assist with recruiting members that better reflect our community profile.*
- *Worked with our Latino Leadership Coalition to support [voting rights](#) and the distribution of Spanish ballots within our community.*
- *[Led](#) adoption of the [Sanctuary for Peace ordinance](#) in our city which: affirmed our belief in immigrant rights, expressly stating that City services are to be provided to all residents, regardless of immigration status; affirmed that City employees shall not ask for immigration status from any resident; affirmed that Salem Police shall not undertake immigration-related investigations or routinely inquire about the immigration status of any person. We were among the first municipalities across the Commonwealth to adopt this policy, joining our neighbors in Chelsea, Lawrence, and Somerville in upholding the rights of immigrants in our community.*



- *Established the City's first [Race Equity Task Force](#) to undertake a review of City policies, services, and ordinances, as well as inequities in community systems. This initial report included a series of recommendations, including ways in which success will be measured. A priority of the report was to hire a DEI Director for the City. That position was quickly funded in our current budget and the new Director is expected to start within the next 60 days.*
- *Track and ensure that investments in parks and public spaces are occurring in largely immigrant neighborhoods, such as The Point/El Punto, which is home to one of the highest concentrations of Latinx residents in the North Shore.*
- *Formed an Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee within Salem Public Schools aimed at ensuring equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for every child who attends the Salem Public Schools*

To address racial disparities that impact child well-being and poverty, we must work intentionally to take on the disparities from the generational wealth gaps that persist. We know that access to an adequate public education and pathways to homeownership are two of the strongest determinants to addressing the racial and ethnic wealth gap. Unfortunately, data also reveals Massachusetts has one of the highest racial homeownership gaps in the country. In addition to adequately funding our public schools (discussed in greater detail in the Education section), we must also be intentional in expanding programming to support first-time homebuyers, specifically designated to support historically marginalized people and communities who have been deprived of the opportunities to generate wealth through homeownership.

Equally important are opportunities to support entrepreneurs from Black and brown communities who have historically been deprived of capital, technical support, relationships and networks, and other resources to jumpstart their businesses. There is an opportunity here to introduce public-private partnerships to invest in people and their ideas, and to create a sustainable framework from which to strengthen entrepreneurial opportunities, which will inevitably also have a positive impact on local economies and downtowns across the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts must also expand DEI efforts, having more agencies adopt practices like the "Massport Model" as we look to procure public service and dispose of public land, and expand access to state contracts to minority and women owned businesses. In essence, we need to apply models that intentionally factor in racial equity metrics within the qualifications for contracting work and disposition of public property. The state and municipalities can lead in this area by adopting such practices to generate economic empowerment for Black and brown communities. In order to do so, we will need to amend current procurement statutes which hamper the opportunity to leverage this work.



In terms of a policy adopted in another state that I would like to see adopted here: children in Massachusetts should have access to universal early education. In Salem, I oversaw the expansion of free, high quality early education opportunities, providing enhanced offerings starting at 4-years-old through a mixed-model approach with public schools and private providers. Offering high quality early education opportunities in every Gateway City and beyond is one of the best investments our Commonwealth can make to help working families, to support economic advancement for women, and to ensure long-term prosperity for the Commonwealth's youngest residents. As Lt. Governor, I would bring this understanding from successfully adopting early childhood education in our city and apply this experience to push our legislature to dedicate the necessary funding, in addition to working closely with cities and towns to properly integrate these efforts into their education system. A state as resourceful as Massachusetts should be a leader on this issue.

3. Transition Age youth are struggling to move out of state care without comprehensive plans for support, including plans for housing, education, employment and health care needs. How would you work to ensure these youth can transition successfully to adulthood?

Our state must do a better job of supporting youth transitioning out of state care into adulthood. In Salem we have worked closely with a nonprofit partner, Plummer Youth Promise (formerly the Plummer Home), and with our Homelessness Task Force to ensure youth have access to local services and supports as they make this challenging transition. These efforts have been helped by our intentional choice to establish the New Liberty Innovation School, a public school in our district that works with unhoused and housing insecure youth, along with a multitude of community partners like Plummer, the Salem YMCA, Salem Friends & Family Services, North Shore Community Action Programs, North Shore Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth, Harbor Light Community Partners, and the North Shore CDC. These mission focused non-profits do incredible work, but without a consistent and reliable state partner to back them up with funding, programs, and technical assistance, they can only do so much. As a local leader I have worked diligently to support this vulnerable population and I have the local experience and results to best understand how to carry that work forward on a statewide basis as Lt. Governor.

4. The pandemic has heightened the need for increased, dedicated, sustained funding for children's mental health services in the community and schools. How would you use your position to make sure that all children in need of mental health services receive them in a timely fashion?

Our kids have been hit hard by this pandemic – most assuredly with respect to behavioral health and social and emotional struggles. In Salem, where I chair the School Committee, we had already set up in-school mental health clinics pre-pandemic to help ensure students were getting access to the therapeutic services they need. Providing on-site counseling services reduces barriers to service and helped make sure care was integrated with educational plans.



We have a [City Connects](#) program that conducts outreach directly to families to determine what they may need at home ranging from housing and food insecurity, mental health resources at home, and other strategies to help remove stigma within the classroom and in their households for students and families to address mental health. In the past, that effort has included at-home visits and a detailed, personalized plan for every single student. [A strength of this program](#) is that it enables us to leverage and mobilize partners in our community to support student (and family) needs. Having staffing and infrastructure in place pre-pandemic to provide effective social and emotional support programs within our public schools helped prepare the district to support our children when the pandemic struck.

As Lt. Governor, I would use my platform to work with school districts to adopt a similar model and also advocate on their behalf to obtain legislative funding to support this effort, as well as additional funding for schools to have a stronger psychologist-to-student ratio.

5. How would you foster work across agencies and in collaboration with service providers and advocates to advance solutions to complex problems faced by children and families? What are your thoughts about a Children's Cabinet or similar advisory working group organized by the Administration?

I would look to use my position as Lt. Governor to serve as a convener and a champion of this important work. In Salem, where I chair the School Committee, we convened a Children's Cabinet several years ago and that body has been invaluable as a tool for coordination, communication, and collaboration on behalf of our kids. Many of the organizations I listed above have representation on that Cabinet and it has served as the backbone of the Our Salem, Our Kids effort to ensure every child has the full range of emotional and social supports they require both inside our schools and outside of the classroom walls. I would work with Governor Healey to set up a similar advisory working group on a statewide basis as Lt. Governor.

6. What steps would you take to ensure Massachusetts is able to recruit and retain a stable workforce of high-quality human service workers that ensures a thriving service network that reaches every local community? What is your view of the partnership between the Commonwealth and the network of contracted providers who also provide services?

Human service workers play a pivotal role in our Commonwealth because they help improve people's well-being, especially the most vulnerable among us. As the Mayor of Salem, I was proud to fund the addition of more social workers at our Council on Aging and the establishment of a paid social work internship at the COA to help build the professional pipeline for future human service workers. In addition, we have routinely ensured that our public schools have a full complement of social workers as we provide a range of student and family services in all PreK-12 schools that seek to ensure every student has what they need to thrive in school and the community. School social workers are key in our efforts and we are grateful to have embedded a number of social workers and certified school



counselors across the district to assist teaching staff and learning environments both in and out of school.

The COVID pandemic taught us many things about public health and the delivery of essential public services - including where we need to improve or strengthen what we do as a Commonwealth. One of the keystones of our community's response were our local human service workers, who served as crisis responders with some of our most at-risk residents during the pandemic. Whether it was our homeless and housing insecure residents or our seniors or students, these workers were instrumental in connecting the various populations with food security, mental health supports, and public health services like testing and vaccines.

I value our human service workers as a critical part of what makes our Commonwealth function. I would work with Governor Healey to ensure these important individuals are properly compensated, listened to, and supported.

7. What else should our members know about your plans to prioritize children and families in your policy making?

Earlier this year, Salem was host to the 2022 "Children's Human Rights in the USA" conference. I was proud that our local university convened this important and timely event, and equally proud to offer words of welcome as the conference commenced. Eight years ago, on the 25th anniversary of the passage of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Salem adopted a resolution affirming our community's commitment to the convention and declaring that Salem would always be a "child and youth rights respecting community" and we've put that commitment into action. We established the Salem Youth Commission to elevate the concerns and voices in self-advocacy of Salem youth. We assembled the Children's Cabinet of community agencies and stakeholders to better coordinate the delivery of critical services to Salem children. We expanded universal pre-K to every four-year-old in our city and expanded free school lunch and summer meals to ensure no child would need to suffer from hunger. We launched Our Salem, Our Kids, an initiative housed within the Salem Public Schools to support the emotional and social needs of every Salem child, inside and outside our schools. And we've enchanted budget and policy proposals to expand access to mental health assistance, housing, and other essential services for our younger residents. This work is far from over, however. As a mother and as a mayor, I would welcome the opportunity to carry it forward on a larger scale as Massachusetts' next Lieutenant Governor.