

## Questionnaire on Community Health and Community Development for Candidates for Mayor of Boston

### Responses of Marty Walsh

- 1. Community Health and Racial Inequities: *Mayor Menino has been an effective advocate for reducing racial and ethnic health inequities. What will you do to build on that work?***

### BACKGROUND:

*The Boston Public Health Commission released a study a few years ago on mortality and morbidity in Boston that revealed very major differences amongst races. It was also highly correlated to socio-economic and geographic locations showing that residents in certain areas had substantially higher rates. The State responded by creating a Commission on Racial inequities in health care. The Commission has steadfastly cited institutional racism as the dominant cause of these inequities. This has gained some acceptance in the very liberal wing of health care in Boston.*

I agree that we have to start by acknowledging that large racial disparities and even engrained institutional racism exists in the city of Boston. I will address issues of health disparities by working with government agencies, private organizations, and non-profits in an effort to reduce the racial and ethnic health problems in this city. Boston clearly needs to do a better job of making proper health services more available to all of its citizens and can start by making sure all of its citizens are aware of the services we offer them. Many studies show that people living in areas with lower socioeconomic conditions are more prone to higher morbidity rates. This is unacceptable for our city, which is home to some of the best and most innovative health care institutions in the world. Connecting our community health centers to our major hospitals we can bring effective care to our entire city. As mayor, I will make sure our citizens are getting the best care possible no matter what race or ethnicity they call their own.

- 2. Community Resilience: *What would you do to develop systems and skills that increase the resilience of residents in neighborhoods experiencing high rates of violence, substance abuse, suicide and other community traumas?***

I believe these neighborhoods need to unite around a common goal in order to bring down the rates of these tragedies. Communities, neighborhoods, and the city as a whole should come together and say that we will no longer tolerate the actions of those who cause horrors or hardships for the people of these neighborhoods. I plan to institute a grassroots plan to bring the fight against violence, trauma, and substance abuse to the doors of those who need assistance most. This initiative will bring our communities closer together than ever before by informing

our most vulnerable populations of the services and support programs the city offers. This program along with a citywide goal of peace and unity in our streets will bring our citizens closer together than ever before and reduce the problems we see in our city.

**3. Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence: *What is one thing that you, as Mayor, think is the most important way to decrease domestic/Intimate partner abuse, which accounts for a significant portion of assaults in Boston?***

Domestic violence prevention will be a priority in my administration. The current rate of domestic violence cases is much too high, while the services offered are inadequate. I will work with the Department of Public Health, the Boston Public Health Commission, and existing programs to find the most effective ways of generating services for these victims. I would also push for a more immediate response to these types of crimes. Ultimately, I would like to see a social worker responding to domestic violence calls, along with police officers, to help the victim navigate the channels to getting the best care possible for the future.

**4. Education:**

**4.a. *Given the importance of good early childhood care and education as a predictor for lifelong health, what will you do to increase the number of children, particularly in communities of color, in such education programs and enhance the quality of those programs?***

Early childhood education is enormously beneficial for children both at an early age and down the road. As mayor, I would increase the number of seats available by teaming up schools and community centers along with non-profits to bring as many young children into the classroom as possible. I will advocate with the state and federal government to help fund this program so that all of Boston's children will have access to early education. I will also enlist the community health centers that see the parents of these children on a regular basis to help make sure they have a plan for their child's future., including by having an early childhood education specialist available to discuss the possibilities with these new parents.

**4.b. *What is the most important goal you will tell your new BPS Superintendent to work towards and why?***

A BPS Superintendent in my administration would be an education professional, forward-thinking and savvy in both policy and practical politics, who has held prior leadership position in an urban setting sufficient to succeed in a city the size of Boston. I'm looking for someone who is innovative and collaborative; someone who is willing and able to make the most advantage of the incredible wealth of existing resources in Boston: our colleges, hospitals, foundations, arts and culture institutions, civic institutions, and so on. The Superintendent would be responsible for overseeing a portfolio of schools, public, pilot, charter, traditional and non-traditional, with

an eye toward making sure they are all working collectively to the ultimate benefit of our children. I plan to hire the best and the brightest in all positions, but it is especially critical that we get this one right.

**5. Environmental Issues: *What additional measures will you take to improve the air quality, particularly in neighborhoods with industrial sites, waste transfer sites, and highways?***

Air quality is a huge issue in Massachusetts, and especially Boston. We have one of the highest rates of asthma in the United States and innovative measures to reduce this are desperately needed. In areas with industrial and construction sites. I will encourage the use of air contaminant scrubbers on all heavy machinery (these scrubbers can reduce toxic emissions by more than 90 percent. I will also enforce stricter idling laws, encourage MBTA usage by increasing access, and make biking and walking safer for our citizens. ) Our city needs to realize that air pollution affects all of us, and if we all pitch in just a little bit we can make a healthy change for our future.

**6. Gambling: *In what ways will you ensure that mitigation money from an East Boston casino benefit the residents of East Boston and the City of Boston?***

In addition to all of the mitigation everyone is talking about related to infrastructure, we will work to ensure that there is funding for all kinds of addiction services. I showed my commitment to this work in the legislature, and will continue it as Mayor.

**7. Health Care Access: *What will you do to ensure that the large non-English speaking population has access to and receives culturally appropriate high quality health care?***

I will work to create a long term plan that involves community health centers and programs that will make sure we have a sustainable future for the population of new citizens. We will work with all communities to make sure all issues are taken head on as a one-size-fits-all solution is not something that will work here. We live in an innovative city and we will make sure these populations have all of the opportunities possible in order to become responsible and successful citizens.

**8. HIV/AIDS: *Overall, Boston and MA has significantly reduced the rate of new HIV infections, except in communities of color. How will you work to address this epidemic among Black and Latino communities, including the LGBT members of those communities?***

I greatly respect the work and success the Commonwealth and City of Boston have accomplished in lowering the rates of HIV infection. However, the problem is far from solved. We need to stay committed to finding a way to reach all of those affected and make sure they have the necessary

services to help them with their condition. I will work with the BPS to ensure age appropriate medically accurate sexual education that better educates our young people to know the dangers of sexually transmitted infections. I will also work with community health centers, especially in areas with high rates of HIV, to educate people about safe sex and how to make sure they limit their chances of contracting infection. We know that education and proper screenings are keys to reducing the rates of sexually transmitted diseases. We need to make it easier for all of our citizens to get these services, and as mayor, I will work to do so.

**9. Homelessness: *What will your administration do differently to address the issue of homelessness, particularly for families with children?***

Homelessness is a multifaceted problem that requires a multifaceted response. The Housing First model is something I am very interested in increasing. In order to make more space in our city I will work with incoming developers to add affordable housing that can be used for our homeless. I will also use abandoned properties and refit them in order to house people who need housing most. I will also work with mental health and substance abuse agencies to increase services for our homeless who are often suffering from more than just a bad economic situation.

**10. Housing:**

**10.a. *What creative plans do you have for addressing the need for more housing that is affordable for working families who do not qualify for subsidized housing but cannot afford market rate housing by increasing resources through linkage, inclusionary development and other tools?***

We will look to innovative models, through public land disposition, and tax/zoning incentives, to create affordable and workforce housing for our families, working adults, and young residents to stay in Boston without negatively impacting market rate housing efforts.

**10.b. *Would you be willing to implement a health-based housing standard for all rehab investments made by the City that ensures the creation of healthier housing by addressing home-based environmental health hazards and energy efficiency to reduce the high costs of asthma, lead poisoning, trip & fall injuries and energy in low to moderate income homes?***

Household toxins are extremely dangerous to the residents living in city-run housing. I will work with the inspectional services department to make sure that all public housing in the city of Boston is inspected properly and given the maintenance it needs so our citizens can live comfortably. I would fully support a health-based standard in the city to make sure these repairs are taken care of as soon as possible. If we expect the population of these homes to succeed then we need to make sure their living conditions are conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

**11. Jobs and Youth: *How will you improve the opportunities for Boston youth to be employed in the health, science, education, and social services sector which account for one third of Boston's jobs?***

This city has a wealth of potential opportunities to get our young people on the right track to a great future. The challenge is to translate those potentials into reality, I want to continue and expand our summer job program by bringing it into the school year and expanding the ages allowed to participate. I want to collaborate with the incredibly rich base of medical institutions, colleges, and the booming innovation district to generate more jobs and mentorships for our youths. These are chances for our young people to gain some independence and real world experience and see professionals from all job markets that they can look up to and strive to be. The connections they make in these jobs can be keys to their future and can lead to a new generation of talented young people to move Boston forward.

**12. Neighborhood Economic Development and Planning: *What specific changes in zoning, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and development processes will you advocate for in Boston's lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods that will be responsive to local input and spur economic improvement and jobs?***

As I travel around the city, I am hearing loudly and clearly that many people are unhappy with how development decisions are being made in Boston and its neighborhoods. Under my plan, the BRA will be reconfigured and adapted into a 21st century model of vision, transparency, and efficiency. The Mayor will have less direct power. Multiple entities with similar responsibilities will be consolidated into one, creating tax savings and eliminating duplication. Existing Boards will be merged, and individual citizens and developers will find a process that is more open, less arbitrary and far easier to navigate.

**13. Substance Use and Prevention: *How would you improve the provision of prevention of and treatment for substance abuse?***

Those who know my story know this is an extremely important and personal issue to me. I will create an Office of Recovery Resources in City Hall under the Boston Public Health Commission. This office will oversee the agencies in the city to make sure they are working together to help one of the most vulnerable populations in the city. I will also expand the current hotline into a 24-hour line so people will be able to learn about and receive services when they are ready. I will also increase the number of detoxification beds designated for Boston residents. I will make sure sober homes in the city are meeting all local ordinances and offering proper care.

**14. Transportation: *Given the MBTA's fiscal problems, how would you improve access to public transportation, particularly in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods?***

In order to help low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, I will coordinate with the MBTA to explore dedicated bus lanes on high density, underserved routes and work to implement an Urban Ring service. I will encourage citizens in these areas to take part in development organization so they have a voice in bringing the services they need to their areas. I will also expand the Hubway program into neighborhoods so that people have access to this great service. A proper transportation system is vital to the city and areas that need more services have to get them. I hope to listen to and work on the needs of our most underserved areas.

**15. Violence Prevention/Public Safety: *What changes will you make to dramatically reduce the amount of violence in communities of color?***

All Bostonians need to unite around a common goal in order to bring down the rates of these tragedies. Communities, neighborhoods, and the city as a whole should come together and say that we will no longer tolerate the actions of those responsible for such horrors and hardships. I plan to institute a grassroots plan to bring the fight against violence, trauma, and substance abuse to the doors of those who need assistance most. This initiative will bring our communities closer together than ever before by informing our most vulnerable populations of the services and support programs the city offers. This program along with a citywide goal of peace and unity in our streets will bring our citizens closer together than ever before and reduce the problems we see in our city.