

# Michelle Wu

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**What is the most pressing issue facing the City of Boston and what would you do to address it?**

The most pressing issue facing the city is inequity in access to opportunity. Boston is a city of resources, but too often these resources are not getting down to the neighborhood level because of cultural, language or geographic barriers. I believe that our crises of urban violence, inadequate school outcomes, and homelessness stem from a lack of economic security. My priorities as a City Councilor would be creating Pipelines to Opportunity: 1) connecting education with employment through partnerships to support our schools; 2) simplifying government processes to remove barriers to entry and access; and 3) making use of data and technology to better connect residents with city government. My office would be a hub of information and advocacy to connect residents with available resources and programs, while pushing for resources at the neighborhood level - growing community health centers, libraries, community centers, and schools as access points for holistic services.

**Do you support a comprehensive study of the operation and efficiency at the Boston Fire Department? Please explain why or why not.**

Yes. I believe Boston residents and all stakeholders benefit from having the most current information and from transparent decision-making. Members of the Boston Fire Department take on the dangerous and unpredictable work of keeping residents and businesses safe. Staffing levels, operational practices, and firehouse locations should reflect the importance of having safe neighborhoods and rapid response times to emergencies while recognizing that our limited city budget must support many programs across the city, from parks to potholes. A comprehensive study to identify efficiencies and departmental needs based on data would allow the City to make decisions based on the most thorough information available.

**What specific steps do you believe need to be taken to improve the city schools?**

- Partnerships with local organizations and businesses to target funding and programming to underperforming schools, then support the transition out of turnaround status
- Holistic services in schools, including mental health, social services, and crisis counseling
- Data and technology to help parents access information: school statistics, amenities, and programs should be searchable through an easily filtered website, so parents can get information about school options and make informed selection decisions
- School Department's Central office should take on support roles that free principals to focus on academic quality, such as facilities management, coordinating partnerships, constituent services, while pushing funding and autonomy to school level
- Extended school day with an intentional plan for extra time, between enrichment, arts, sports, etc.
- Shared best practices: all district schools (traditional public schools, Commonwealth charter, in-district charter) should have a forum to share best practices from teaching methods to programming
- Focus on early childhood education, more pre-K seats

**Voters are just getting to know you. Tell us one thing about your background or life experience that you think it's important for them to know.**

I'd like voters to know that I'm a hard worker. My life has been focused on family: I'm the daughter of immigrants who landed in the U.S. not speaking English and with nothing in their pockets. I worked hard to be able to attend Harvard College on a scholarship and graduated to a

great job in Boston. When my mother began to face serious mental health struggles six years ago, I became legal guardian for my younger sister, brought my family to Boston, and got involved with the Boston Public Schools. I have opened and run a family business--a neighborhood cafe--and understand firsthand the direct impact city government has on the life of families, from businesses to schools to public safety. Because of my experience, I understand the impact of city services on families, and my office would focus on constituent services to connect families to Boston's many resources.

**What's the most significant thing that can be done to improve transportation in the city, ranging from parking and congestion to pedestrian and bike safety?**

The most significant thing would be improving transportation between neighborhoods. Too often neighborhoods are discussed only as places of residence, rather than destinations. Instead of focusing solely on improving transit between neighborhoods and Downtown, transportation discussions should envision every neighborhood as a destination that needs to be served with accessible, convenient transit. This would support vibrant small business districts in the neighborhoods as well as increased economic opportunity and jobs in the neighborhoods. Although significant investments in infrastructure at the state level would be needed to increase the density of our public transit network, we can advocate for immediate changes to enhance our current infrastructure. For example, transit signal prioritization could help make our buses closer to actual rapid transit. Improving bicycling and walking safety through cycle tracks, clearly marked intersections, expanding Hubway into underserved neighborhoods, and a focus on complete streets would also improve neighborhood-to-neighborhood transportation.

**Boston has a weak council form of government. Should there be a City Council and what should the role of the Council be?**

Yes. The role of the City Council should be to advocate for families and neighborhoods as direct representatives, and to connect residents with the resources of the City. City Councilors serve as the first line of government for the residents of Boston, working on constituency issues that ensure a healthy quality of life for families and neighborhoods. The powers to approve the budget, call hearings, and write municipal ordinances make the Council an important facilitation point for city resources.

**Do you think the Boston Residency Jobs Policy is working and, if not, how would you improve it?**

No. Although we are making strides, Boston residents deserve a quicker pace of reform and access to local jobs. We need to focus on improving outreach and recruitment to connect more Boston residents to unions and organizations. I would work with unions and community organizations to connect more Boston residents to these opportunities.

**Would you support a Home Rule Petition to change the Charter of the City Council so it could be given more authority?**

Yes.

**Do you support a Walmart opening in Boston?**

No.

**Would you vote for the arbitration award for the police patrolmen's union?**

No. Our city jobs should be good jobs that provide economic stability for families while also managing the City's resources as wisely and efficiently as possible.

**Should the cap on charter schools be lifted?**

No. I have visited many schools in the district, from traditional public schools to Commonwealth charter schools, to in-district charter schools. I do not support lifting the charter cap for funding reasons, because our traditional public schools are in need of resources to manage and maintain improvements. I would focus first on encouraging all schools in the district to collaborate more intensively and share best practices so that the great results we see in individual charter schools and traditional public schools can improve schools throughout the district.

**Would you march in the South Boston parade?**

No. I would not march in any parade that is not open and inclusive to everyone.

**Do you support the Suffolk Downs casino?**

No. I do not support casinos. I am extremely concerned about any casino's impacts on mental health, traffic, local small business, and public safety. However, I do believe that Boston should have a say in the Eastern Massachusetts gambling license created by state legislature because we will be dealing with the impacts whether a casino is in Boston or in Everett. I have read the host community agreement, and would have liked to see stronger provisions for bringing casino operators back to the table with the City in case expectations are not met.

**Do you support an East Boston-only vote on the planned casino?**

Yes. The impacts of the casino will be felt most acutely by the residents of East Boston, and I support a neighborhood vote.