

Charlie Baker Candidate Questionnaire Responses 2014

1. What will be your top public health priorities if elected governor?

Access, affordability and transparency: Ensuring everyone in Massachusetts has access to quality, affordable health care will be a top priority of mine. The rising cost of health care and the botched and costly implementation of the Affordable Care Act in Massachusetts are problems in desperate need of a solution. As governor, I will use my years of health care experience in the private and public sector to improve care, increase cost transparency and reduce the cost of health care in Massachusetts. I have put forward a series of proposals to improve services, save families money and protect our system from unnecessary federal overreach. Massachusetts is a great place filled with great people and we need to make sure our health care system works for the people. My full plan is available here: www.charliebaker2014.com/health-care-priorities.

Addiction: We need to aggressively address the addiction crisis in Massachusetts. My priorities will be addressing both prevention and treatment and engaging stakeholders and the public in solving this problem together. Solutions will include a central state database to track overdoses, mandating doctors consult the Prescription Monitoring Program, and engaging in a frank discussion with the medical community about the treatment of pain and use of opioids, in order to slow the increasing trend of prescribing these highly-addictive drugs. . My full plan is available here: www.charliebaker2014.com/addiction.

Homeless families: I will work to end the practice of placing homeless families in hotels and motels and instead help these families to remain in, or find, stable living situations. Putting families in hotels and motels far from their communities is not a compassionate solution to this problem. I know there is a better way because the state has done it before, when I worked in the Weld and Cellucci administrations. My full plan for addressing family homelessness is here: www.charliebaker2014.com/family-homelessness.

Contraception coverage: In light of the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision, I would ensure that there are funds available through the Department of Public Health for any woman who cannot access all forms of contraception through her employer.

2. We know that our health is closely related to our zip code – people living in low income communities and communities of color live shorter lives and have a higher burden of illness. What are three specific actions you would take to change this?

First, I would work with the communities and areas most affected by this disparity to determine how best to tackle this problem. Second, I would ensure the state programs designed to increase access to health care for low-income and underserved populations are adequately funded and operating effectively. Third, now that we have near-universal health care coverage, I would work to ensure vulnerable populations are aware of and making the most of services offered through their health insurance (such as preventative measures).

- 3. We know the best way to control healthcare costs is through focusing on prevention-oriented solutions before we ever get sick; however, Department of Public Health programs whose purposes are to prevent chronic diseases have been affected most by budget cuts during the recent recession. As governor, would you support increased state funding for chronic disease prevention programs?**

As a former CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, I know well how important prevention is to controlling health care costs. We took many steps at HPHC to encourage preventative measures and healthy behaviors. I will support an adequate level of funding for chronic disease prevention programs, which are not only important to the health of Massachusetts citizens, but also to saving on future health care costs. I will also support adequate funding for smoking cessation programs, which are very important to public health.

- 4. We know that actions by state agencies related to housing, development, and transportation impact our health. How would you support and encourage these “non-health” agencies to consider the health impacts of their policies and practices?**

As a former Secretary of Health and Human Services and former CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, I am very passionate about health care and very aware of the health impacts public policy can have. As governor, I will ensure the leaders in my administration are aligned in working towards a common vision of a great Massachusetts, which includes a healthy and safe public.

- 5. This year hundreds of people in Massachusetts died as a result of opiate overdoses. As governor, what would you do to prevent substance abuse and overdose?**

I care deeply about the individuals and families affected by this addiction crisis and, as governor, I will be proactive about addressing both prevention and treatment. I will use the power of the office to engage the health care system and the public to tackle this problem. I have the experience in state government (as a former Secretary of Health and Human Services) and in the

health care industry (as former CEO of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care) to bring a fresh and effective solution to this problem, which will involve our community acting together to address the causes, improve treatment programs and end the stigma around addiction. You can read my full plan for preventing and treating addiction here: www.charliebaker2014.com/addiction

6. Do you think our state's tax system is stable, equitable, aligned with health policy, and sufficient to meet our public needs? If not, what changes do you support?

I don't think our tax system is perfect, but I do think it's sufficient to meet our public needs if we manage and spend those tax revenues responsibly. I will not raise taxes, but I am open to reviewing and revising our tax code to make it simpler and more equitable.

7. How do you plan to vote on ballot questions 1 and 4 on the upcoming November ballot?

a. Q1: Repeal of gas tax indexing

I plan to vote for the repeal of gas tax indexing. I oppose the idea of an automatic tax increase; I believe our elected officials should have to take a vote whenever they want to raise our taxes.

b. Q4: Earned paid sick leave

Although I support the principle of earned paid sick leave for workers, I do not support this ballot question. I think all employers should provide some sort of sick leave time to their full time employees, and it is encouraging that most do. I think we can and should be more creative than just a one-size-fits-all mandate. I'd like to work with both the employer community and labor community to see if we can find a way to achieve this goal, possibly by putting in place incentives that would achieve the goal while giving businesses some flexibility in how they do it. I have spoken with some employers who are concerned that this mandate would eliminate or significantly alter their existing benefit programs, which their employees value. That said, I do believe in the ballot petition process, so if voters pass this initiative, I will work hard to implement it.