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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY MEMO

TO: Retailers Association of Massachusetts
FR: Ernest Paicopolos—CEO, Polity Research Consulting LLC
RE: Executive Summary—2026 Massachusetts Registered Voter Survey

Polity Research Consulting conducted a WEB-based survey among 608 Massachusetts registered voters between April 29th and May 7th, 2026. The sample was constructed to represent the registered voter population of the state. The margin of error on the full, 608-member sample is $\pm 3.97\%$ at the mid-range of the 95% confidence interval. That is, when conducting 100 such surveys, 95 of them will yield results that fall—*at worst*—3.97 points on either side of a given percentage.

The results from this survey indicate that Massachusetts voters are laser-focused on the “pocketbook” issues they have to face every day. When asked an open-ended question about the ‘most important problems’ facing the state, ***eight of the top ten responses*** deal with some aspect of the cost of living in Massachusetts—ranging from energy and housing to health care and groceries. When asked if leaders on Beacon Hill have “helped” or “hurt” the effort to make life more affordable in the state, a majority (53%) say those leaders have ***hurt*** the affordability cause. When presented with information on health care and energy mandates passed by legislators—along with the fact of increased state spending at *twice* the rate that taxpayer income—voters are even *more* likely to think state leaders are culpable on the affordability front.

And, the overall mood of voters in Massachusetts has *continued* to become more pessimistic—sharply worsening over time. Today, barely more than one-third of voters (36%) think things in Massachusetts are “headed in the right direction”—down 3 points from a year ago. More strikingly, just three years ago the “right direction” number stood at 59%—***23 points higher than it is today***. And, 47% of registered voters express a lack of confidence in the current state of the Massachusetts economy—with just 12% saying they are “very confident” about the state’s economy.

The plurality of Massachusetts registered voters (36%) think state government spends “too much”—an increase of 5% since last year. Also, solid majorities continue to favor *reducing* the state sales tax (59%, up from 55% last year) and local property taxes (60%, up from 58% last year). And, while last year, a plurality thought the state’s 5% income tax should stay at the same level—this year, a plurality (44%) support a *cut* in the income tax. It’s not surprising then, that voters—by a 78% to 15% margin—say they would vote to reduce the state income tax from 5%

to 4%. By a 76% to 12% margin, they *also* favor a ballot measure that would adjust the state revenue spending cap to trigger more frequent refunds to taxpayers.

Solid majorities of registered voters also think that it would help them “make ends meet” each month if the state income tax were lowered (52%), state mandates on health insurance were lowered (56%) and state mandates on utilities were lowered (61%). Focusing on the state’s signature health care mandate, an astounding three-quarters of voters “strongly” (41%) or “somewhat” (34%) agree that—considering its impact on health insurance premiums—it should be *repealed*.

When considering the costs faced by small businesses in Massachusetts, most voters continue to cite health insurance costs as the top obstacle. However, the percentage of voters mentioning “energy and utility” costs has jumped from 9% in 2025 to 16% today.

All in all, it’s clear that Massachusetts registered voters are *strongly* concerned with the cost of living in the state—and, moreover, they see state leaders making things worse. What follows are key questions in the survey dealing with affordability issues (along with demographics):

To start off, what do you think are the one or two most important problems facing Massachusetts today—*the ones that affect you and your family the most?*
[UP TO 2 RESPONSES ACCEPTED/TOTALS MORE THAN 100%]

Cost of living	26%
Cost of housing/Affordable housing	23
Cost of gas/Oil/Energy	14
Taxes	13
Cost of health care	10
Cost of food/Groceries	10
Inflation	9
Government corruption/Issues with government	6
Economy	6
Illegal immigration	6
Jobs/Job stability	5
Money issues	4
Homelessness/Lack of housing	4
Traffic/Congestion/Transportation	4
Trump tariffs/Trump destroying everything	3
Roads/Road conditions	3
Housing in general	3
Education	2
Infrastructure	2
Drugs	2
Poverty	1
Elderly issues/Social Security/Retirement	1
Climate change	1
Other	6
Don’t know	--

Do you think things here in *Massachusetts* are generally headed in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

SCALE:	1. Right Direction	2. Wrong track	3. Don't know
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
April/May 2026	36%	45	19
April 2025	39%	43	18
April 2024	48%	39	13
April 2023	59%	29	12

And, how confident are you about the *current state* of the *Massachusetts* economy?

SCALE:	1. Very confident	2. Somewhat confident	3. Not very confident	4. Not confident at all
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
April/May 2026	12%	41	37	10
April 2025	8%	44	36	12
April 2024	16%	45	28	11

In general, do you think state government here in Massachusetts spends too much, not enough or about the right amount?

SCALE:	1. Too much	2. Not enough	3. About the right amount	4. Don't know
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
April/May 2026	36%	20	27	17
April 2025	31%	20	33	16
April 2024	34%	22	31	14

In general, do you think state leaders on Beacon Hill have *helped or hurt* the effort to make life more affordable here in Massachusetts?

1. Helped affordability	26%
2. Hurt affordability	53
3. Don't know/Not sure	21

In recent years, the Massachusetts State Legislature has passed a series of healthcare and energy mandates. Some people have said that these mandates have caused health insurance premiums and utility bills to rise—and those state mandates now make up about 25% of the average consumers total monthly bills. In addition, lawmakers on Beacon Hill have increased state spending at *twice* the rate that taxpayer income has increased. Having heard this, does it make you much more likely to think leaders on Beacon Hill have *hurt the effort to make the state more affordable*, somewhat more likely to feel that way, or doesn't it make any difference?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Much more likely to hurt affordability | 40% |
| 2. Somewhat more likely to hurt affordability | 33 |
| 3. No difference | 18 |
| 4. Don't know | 9 |

Below is a list of different *taxes* here in Massachusetts. For each one, please indicate whether you think that particular tax should be raised, cut, or whether it should stay the same as it is now.

[LIST ROTATED]

SCALE:	1. Raised	2. Cut	3	4
	3. Stay the same	4. Don't know		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
The state's 6.25% sales tax				
April/May 2026	10%	59	27	4
April 2025	6%	55	34	5
April 2024	5%	56	34	5
The state's 5% income tax				
April/May 2026	10%	44	39	7
April 2025	6%	41	47	6
April 2024	6%	39	49	7
Local property taxes in the state				
April/May 2026	10%	60	23	7
April 2025	6%	58	28	7
April 2024	7%	59	26	8

Thinking about the costs faced by small businesses and their employees in Massachusetts, which *one* of the following do you think causes them the *most* hardship:

	<u>4-5/2026</u>	<u>4/2025</u>
1. Health insurance costs	31%	26%
2. Federal, state and municipal taxes	10	12
3. Energy and utility costs	16	9
4. Federal, state and municipal regulations	4	5
5. Unemployment insurance taxes	2	2
6. Credit card fees paid to banks	1	1
7. All equally	32	38
8. Don't know/Not sure	5	8

For 20 years, Massachusetts has required taxpayers to buy health insurance with certain mandated coverage levels. Failure to buy the coverage means the taxpayer is assessed a state tax penalty—based on income—ranging from \$312 a year to \$2,532 a year per adult. Massachusetts now has the highest health insurance premiums in the nation, these mandates making up 24% of the premiums. In some cases, family policies exceed \$40,000 per year, particularly for employees of small businesses. Some people have said that, given the cost burden on families and employees of small businesses, this health insurance mandate from the state should be repealed. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that the insurance mandate should be repealed in Massachusetts?

1. Strongly agree	41%	75%
2. Somewhat agree	34	
3. Somewhat disagree	19	25%
4. Strongly disagree	6	

Below is a list of public policy actions that *might* take place in Massachusetts. For each one, please indicate how important that particular policy action would be in ***helping you make ends meet in your own household at the end of every month***—very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all. **[ROTATE LIST]**

SCALE:	1. Very important	2. Somewhat important		
	3. Not too important	4. Not important at all		
			1	2
			3	4
Lowering Massachusetts state income taxes from 5% to 4%.	52%	29	15	4
Lowering state mandates on health insurance that add to consumer premiums.	56%	31	10	4
Lowering state mandates on utilities that add to monthly consumer bills.	61%	31	6	2

How would you vote on a ballot measure that would ***adjust the state tax revenue and spending cap to trigger more frequent refunds to taxpayers?*** Do you think you would definitely vote “YES” to lower the state tax revenue and spending cap limit, probably vote “YES”, probably vote “NO” or definitely vote “NO” on such a question?

1. Definitely vote YES	41%	76%
2. Probably vote YES	35	
3. Probably vote NO	9	12%
4. Definitely vote NO	3	
5. Don’t know	12	12%

How would you vote on a ballot measure that would *decrease the Massachusetts state income tax from 5% to 4% by 2029*? Also, for 2027, the tax rate would be 4.67% and for 2028, the tax rate would be 4.33%. Do you think you would definitely vote “YES” to decrease the state income tax rate, probably vote “YES”, probably vote “NO” or definitely vote “NO” on such a question?

1. Definitely vote YES	50%	78%
2. Probably vote YES	28	
3. Probably vote NO	10	15%
4. Definitely vote NO	5	
5. Don't know	7	7%

Now, please complete some final questions for statistical purposes.

In which of the following categories is your age?

1. 18-25	9%
2. 26-35	8
3. 36-45	22
4. 46-55	21
5. 56-64	16
6. 65+	25
9. Refused	--

What is the highest level of education you completed?

1. Some high school or less	2%
2. High school graduate	20
3. Some college or vocational training	24
4. Graduated college	35
5. Graduate school education	19

Please indicate which of the following groups you *most* identify with racially or ethnically:

1. White, Non-Hispanic	76%
2. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	8
3. Black or African-American	9
4. Asian or Pacific Islander	4
5. Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native	--
6. Multi-racial, multi-ethnic background	1
7. Some other race, specify: _____	1
8. Refused	1

How are you registered to vote here in Massachusetts?:

1. Democrat	26%
2. Republican	8
3. Independent (Un-Enrolled)	63
4. Some other party	3

Politically, would you generally consider yourself more of a liberal, more of a conservative, more of a progressive, or more of a moderate?

- | | |
|-----------------|-----|
| 1. Liberal | 22% |
| 2. Conservative | 22 |
| 3. Moderate | 49 |
| 4. Progressive | 4 |
| 5. Refused | 3 |

How likely are you to stay in Massachusetts *long-term*?

- | | |
|----------------------|-----|
| 1. Very likely | 55% |
| 2. Somewhat likely | 26 |
| 3. Not very likely | 8 |
| 4. Not likely at all | 5 |
| 5. Don't know | 5 |

Where do you get *most* of your information about public issues facing the state?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 01. Radio | 3% |
| 02. Local Television | 35 |
| 03. Internet news sites | 24 |
| 04. Newspapers—like <i>The Boston Globe</i> or <i>The Boston Herald</i> | 7 |
| 05. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly TWITTER) | 19 |
| 06. Podcasts | 2 |
| 07. Word of mouth from family and friends | 5 |
| 08. (Other _____) | 2 |
| 09. (Don't know/Refused) | 2 |

Please indicate in which of the following categories is your total household income—that is, of everyone living in your household:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1. \$0-29,999 | 16% |
| 2. \$30-49,999 | 14 |
| 3. \$50-74,999 | 20 |
| 4. \$75-99,999 | 14 |
| 5. \$100,000-\$124,999 | 10 |
| 6. \$125,000 and over | 25 |
| 7. Refused | 2 |

- | | | |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| REGION: | 1. Boston Metro (Middlesex, Suffolk, Norfolk) | 42% |
| | 2. North (Essex) | 11 |
| | 3. South (Dukes, Nantucket, Barnstable, Plymouth, Bristol) | 18 |
| | 4. Central (Worcester) | 15 |
| | 5. West (Hampshire, Hamden, Franklin, Berkshire) | 14 |

