



Dear Neighbor,

My name is Vivian Kobusingye Birchall. I live in Acton, and I am running in the Democratic Primary to become the next State Representative in our district—serving Acton, Carlisle, Chelmsford, and Concord. I am writing to introduce myself, and to talk about why I decided to run for State Representative.

I am not the only Democratic candidate in the race. Simon Cataldo from Concord and Pat Wotjas from Chelmsford are also running. I know that all of us care deeply about our communities and our Commonwealth. I believe, however, that my government and policy experience and my ability to bring together diverse groups of people around shared concerns to turn ideas into action is what would provide the best leadership for all the residents of our district.

I am proud of the work I have done in Acton and regionally, but my story begins in Uganda, where I was raised in a two-room dwelling in the city of Kampala.

When I was 13, I lost my father to an accident and my mother was unable to work. With no stable source of income, we relied on support from the community. I was sent back to rural Uganda for my secondary schooling. The school farmed its food on land tilled by hand, and we got our water from a hand-pumped well two miles away. When I was home from school, I helped my mother raise my six siblings, and worked to supplement the family income—earning one dollar a day selling food or beverages.

Determined to better the circumstances of myself and my family, I applied and was accepted for a degree program in Development Studies at Uganda's Makerere University. By paying semester by semester, and by saving money by eating frugally and not traveling to see my family, I earned a Bachelor's degree and a position with the Ugandan government.

After University, I joined the African Parliamentarian Network Against Corruption (APNAC), serving as Uganda's first country coordinator, where I helped mobilize members of Parliament to pass the Access to Information Act, encouraging transparency and discouraging corruption in lawmaking and other areas of government.

In 2006 I joined the National Planning Authority (NPA) of Uganda. This is the Ugandan department tasked with producing comprehensive and integrated development plans for the country. I worked mainly with two agencies also associated with the African Union; The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). In pursuit of the goals of creating greater economic opportunity for Ugandans, building a more robust social safety system, and establishing Uganda's place in Africa as an ethical governance leader; I developed and honed extensive Financial, Supervisory, and Program and Project Management skills.

At the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, I met and fell in love with my husband, Dan. I left my homeland and we moved to Hawaii and began our family. In Hawaii, among other things, I worked with Hawaii Community Affairs doing research and youth outreach for the "Thirty-Meter

Telescope” project, and I worked in the prosecuting attorney’s office in Special Projects, where I participated in projects addressing truancy, domestic violence, immigration, and environmental issues.

In 2016, our family relocated to Acton and I became immersed in the community. I’ve been privileged to be involved in our town as: Board Member for the Acton-Boxborough United Way, Corporator for Emerson Hospital, staff in the Land Use Department of the Town of Acton and, currently, I am a Producer at Acton Community TV.

So much of my work, and my attitude about public service, grow out of my experiences. When I was a child living in poverty in Uganda, I was fearful of losing another parent or one of my siblings, but that compelled me to seek opportunities to improve the lives not only of myself and my family, but of those in our community. And even though I faced great challenges at the time, I know that I am fortunate to have been able to find these opportunities, and to be able to give back.

My experiences have also taught me that we need leaders, on all levels, who are committed to helping people who struggle, who lack resources, or are otherwise marginalized. We can’t look at people suffering through these experiences as a problem. We must see each other as human beings who need compassion, and opportunities to better their lives.

That is why I decided to run for State Representative. These experiences—from being a child in the slums of Uganda, a young woman given opportunities to better her life, a young adult able to work directly with governments, and an immigrant able to find wonderful new communities to be part of—have given me a profound sense of what we need to do in our district, and across the state. Every day, I’ve been inspired by the people I have met, people I have listened to in my work, and the neighbors who have shared with me their struggles and concerns; their hopes and dreams.

Our district is a vibrant, strong community, with an amazing history, but we know there are challenges. We know we need experienced and compassionate leadership to address these challenges.

In my work with the United Way, I was part of the effort that provided hundreds of meals to local families during the pandemic. As disturbing as it is to learn that we have hunger here in our district, that is the reality, and I have, and I will continue to work with the United Way, and other organizations to address this and other inequities in our neighborhoods.

As Corporator for Emerson Hospital, I have worked with local caregivers in the perinatal unit. My work provided assistance with the cultural understanding between patient and caregiver, an important element toward improving health outcomes.

In my role of Producer for Acton Community Television, I have listened to small business owners, high school students and local leaders. In this position, as in my other community work, I have turned my energies to solving problems. During COVID-19, I helped High School students produce a video for younger children that spoke to their shared experiences in the pandemic.

My passion is accessible, transparent government. I will fight for women’s freedom, to close disparities in health care access, and empower all marginalized people to use their voices for change. I pledge to be a powerful voice for economic, social, and racial justice on Beacon Hill and a State Representative eager to strengthen our democracy.

Some of my priorities:

Environment

The people of our community consistently advocate and organize to promote technologies and processes that will combat climate change and create a sustainable society. We are passionate about caring for our open land and we are all concerned with the quality and availability of our water. We all know that our current timeline for achieving clean energy will not cut emissions in time to mitigate extensive harm to our environment; and our current policies around water regulation and use are outdated and are being stretched just to address PFAS.

Key to combating climate issues is holding polluters accountable. After meeting my husband at the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, we moved to Hawaii. It was there that I learned about the Environmental Courts of Hawaii. I am determined to create such a tool for Massachusetts. Hawaii's Environmental Courts have broad jurisdiction, in both civil and criminal environmental cases covering water, forests, streams, beaches, air, and mountains, along with terrestrial and marine life. This proven effective tool will provide a process to pursue and halt those who degrade our environment.

Healthcare

While Massachusetts boasts some of the best healthcare facilities in the world, the inequities in the care available to our citizens contribute to the economic and financial gaps in our community. Policies that bring equal healthcare access to all residents; facilities that provide safe, timely care, no matter where you live, or work; are the foundation of a thriving society. As Corporator for Emerson Hospital, I have worked within the system to fight for equity and compassion for both patients and caregivers. My work at Emerson Hospital, helping nurses understand cultural differences within the African immigrant community they care for, has led to demonstrably better outcomes.

Women's healthcare is under attack. As a mother of young daughters, the attack on women's healthcare is especially alarming and, I will admit, enraging. Our daughters deserve the access to healthcare that will unlock the potential of their inquisitive minds and allow them to follow their spirits into the bright futures they deserve.

Education

Although my parents were desperately poor, they put the education of myself and my siblings first. Attending the local primary school is the foundation of how my siblings and I have raised ourselves out of poverty. Quality education should be available to all children. I am determined to raise the standard of education throughout our district, and our state.

There are several steps that we can take immediately to increase educational outcomes and close the achievement gap. We need to increase funding to schools now to address the impact from the pandemic. We need to fully fund the transportation costs of our schools, including regional schools. And we need to work toward establishing universal pre-kindergarten across the state.

Investment in Community Business

One of my favorite things in our community is our local businesses. From shops and restaurants to local artisans to small print shops and bicycle sellers, the small businesses in our neighborhoods make our communities joyful, comfortable places to live and shop. In my roles as town employee for Acton's Land Use and Economic Development Department, and for Acton Cable Television, I have worked directly with many

local small business owners; I've talked with them about their joys, their frustrations; their triumphs and their challenges.

One thing I am very clear on is that policy from the state level must be accompanied by the funding and other resources needed to implement any mandated changes. I will fight for EVERY town in my district to receive their share of federal and state funds and I will stay aware of each communities' needs.

Accountable Government

I saw firsthand how lack of accountability and inefficient bureaucracy impedes building a just and equitable society and how lack of transparency keeps local economies from thriving. I have developed many tools for identifying and mitigating such inefficient rules and processes. These solutions are only developed by patient, unrelenting work performed by those determined to create a better system. I am committed to improving our state government in ways that will benefit our district.

Restorative Justice

Communities cannot thrive in an atmosphere of fear. While working with the Prosecuting Attorney (PA) of the Country of Hawaii, I saw the power of justice. Most impactful was the work the office did engaging with the youth in the community. Truancy was a prevalent issue, but instead of relying on punitive practices of punishment, the PA worked to get at the cause of the problem and created solutions that addressed the issues in a community-building and restorative way.

This, to me, is how justice must work. The level of incarceration in our state and our country is unsustainable. My approach is to address problems within our community at their source; strengthening, and sometimes even creating new systems that support our neighbors. All the people in our communities must be heard and supported.

I hope you can visit my website to learn more about me, this campaign, and my priorities in the race. It is such an honor to be able to run for office in such a compassionate community, and it gives me great hope that we can do more and more work to allow all our residents to thrive.

The Democratic Primary is on September 6. If you are interested in helping the campaign, or just getting more information, please do not hesitate to reach out directly. I can be reached at vivian@vivianbirchall.com or (781) 985-2132.

And, of course, I humbly ask for your vote on September 6.

With Respect and Hope,



Vivian Birchall



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Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL5TiNNcX4C5MxcizuITULg>

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