

2026 STATE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

5th Square is Philadelphia's urbanist political action committee. Our mission is to achieve a more accessible, sustainable, and equitable Philadelphia for all residents through better mobility, public space, and planning policies.

Please refer us to any work you have done on these topics in your answers, if applicable. If you have any questions or would like clarification, please email us at 5thsq@5thsq.org

For 5th Square's positions on these issues see: https://www.5thsq.org/2026_issues

You may complete this questionnaire via [Google Form](#) or [Word Document](#) sent to 5thsq@5thsq.org

Responses to our policy questions will be published on our website -- we will not publish contact info and financial data. If you would like us to include a photo with your response, please email it to us at 5thsq@5thsq.org

⚠ DEADLINE: March 20th, 2026 at 11:59 PM. Only candidates who complete this questionnaire are eligible for a 5th Square endorsement.

CANDIDATE INTRODUCTION

Name as it will appear on the ballot: *

MaryLouise Isaacson

Office sought (include district number): *

State Representative, 175th

Campaign Committee Name & Address: *

Friends of Mary Isaacson: 632 N 2nd Street #202 Philadelphia, PA 19123

Campaign Website: *

www.maryisaacson.org

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Candidate introduction (background, motivation for running, relevant experience): *

I am currently running for a fifth term in the PA House of Representatives as a proud and passionate fighter for the 175th legislative district. Prior to serving as state representative, I worked as a staffer in the PA House Democratic Caucus for 12 years, working on a range of issues from constituent services to drafting bills to bringing home resources. In years past, I was honored to be ranked the Least Conservative Member in the House and also was ranked first in the entire state for bringing home state funding to my district. I also served on the Basic Education Funding Commission which recommended and helped draft the historic legislation in 2024 that fundamentally changed the way that school districts are funded in the state to meet the constitutional mandate of equitably funding schools, resulting in historic investments in Philadelphia and other underfunded schools and school districts.

As a person who believes that policy can push social change, I have introduced and championed legislation addressing issues ranging from charter school reform to an economic bill of rights to pay range disclosures to environmental initiatives to local regulations on gun control. I serve on the Policy Committee as Vice Chair, Transportation Committee as Secretary, Consumer Protection, Technology & Utilities Committee, Education Committee, Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee, Liquor Control Committee, and the Ethics Committee. I am also the Democratic Chair of the Community College Caucus.

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ROADWAY SAFETY & HIGHWAYS

Philadelphia had 120 traffic fatalities in 2024 — stubbornly high compared to peer cities. Some of Pennsylvania's most dangerous streets are PennDOT-owned arterials running through dense urban neighborhoods. As a state legislator, you have direct authority over PennDOT's mission, budget, and legislation governing how roads are designed and operated.

1. PennDOT has proposed widening I-95 south of I-676 through Center City and South Philadelphia, adding travel lanes and expanding ramps. Do you support this project as proposed? *

- Yes. Support as proposed
- Support rehabilitation only. No added Lanes.
- Oppose the project entirely.
- Undecided

Comment / Please explain

2. [HB 291 \(parking-protected bike lanes\)](#) would allow PennDOT to design and build bike lanes with a parked-car buffer on state roads, which PennDOT is currently not permitted to do. Do you support HB 291? *

Yes

No

Other:

Comment / Please explain

3. [HB 1504, the 'Vulnerable Road User' Bill](#), would increase fines for reckless drivers who cause death or serious injury to pedestrians, cyclists, or other vulnerable users. Do you support HB 1504? *

Yes

No

Other:

Comment / Please explain

4. PennDOT's mission is often described as maximizing the flow of cars through our streets and highways at all costs. *
Which of the following reforms would you prioritize to reorient PennDOT toward a safety-first culture? Select all that apply.

- Adopt Vision Zero and the Safe Systems Approach as formal agency goals
- Create a separate PennDOT district/office serving Philadelphia specifically
- Hire and empower a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian coordinator with project approval authority
- Adopt a 'Fix It First' policy prioritizing maintenance over expansion
- Adopt a standardized project scoring formula (like Virginia's SMART SCALE) to allocate transportation dollars based on a balance of safety, accessibility (to jobs), and equity outcomes.
- Remove the municipal maintenance agreement requirement that allows a single township official to block sidewalk construction on PennDOT projects
- None of the above / I oppose these reforms
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

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5. Would you support a statewide tax credit for e-bikes (electric bicycles), similar to popular programs enacted in [Colorado](#) * and [Denver](#) that have demonstrably reduced automotive vehicle miles traveled?

- Yes
- No
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

SEPTA faces a \$213 million operating deficit and over \$5 billion in unfunded capital needs, stemming in part from the expiration of Act 89 funding. Without a legislative solution, SEPTA faces severe service cuts with wide economic consequences for the Commonwealth. As a state legislator, you control the funding formulas, enabling legislation, and budget allocations that determine SEPTA's survival.

6. SEPTA's operating deficit requires a dedicated, recurring revenue solution. The Transit For All PA coalition has proposed several options. Please rank the following funding mechanisms from most to least preferred (1 = most preferred), or mark 'Oppose' for any you would not support:

6a. Interstate User Fees (statewide tolls on interstates/expressways) *

Dropdown

Rank: 1 ▼

6b. Allow counties and municipalities to raise their own money for public transit ([HB 1146](#)) *

Dropdown

Rank: 2 ▼

6c. [Congestion pricing](#): allow municipalities and counties to levy tolls on vehicles entering their most congested areas

* Dropdown

Rank: 4 ▼

6d. Excise tax on third-party vehicle deliveries (e.g., Amazon) *

Dropdown

Rank: 3 ▼

Comment / Please explain

7. HB 1146 would allow local governments to levy their own taxes and fees to fund public transit in their jurisdictions. Do you support this local revenue-enabling legislation? *

- Yes
- No
- Other:

If yes: what local revenue tools should be permitted? Select all you support:

- Payroll tax
- Employer head tax
- Real estate transfer tax
- Parking tax
- Sales tax
- Property tax
- Land value tax
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

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8. SEPTA is pursuing three major service transformation initiatives: the New Bus Network redesign, Reimagining Regional Rail (more frequent service with fare integration), and Trolley Modernization. Do you support state-level actions to accelerate these initiatives? *

- Yes, accelerate all three
- Yes, some of them (specify below)
- No -- let SEPTA proceed at its own pace
- No -- I have concerns about one or more

Comment / Please explain

9. Do you support funding and constructing a [Roosevelt Boulevard subway](#) connecting Northeast Philadelphia to Center City via the Broad Street Line? *

Yes

No

Other:

If yes: what concrete steps would you take in the first two years of your term to advance planning and secure funding?

Comment / Please explain

10. Would you support a state tax credit for households that own zero or one cars, as a complement to transit investment and to reduce congestion and emissions? *

Yes

No

Other:

Comment / Please explain

HOUSING & LAND USE

Pennsylvania needs 450,000 new housing units by 2035, per the state's own Housing Action Plan.

11. Which of the following statements do you agree with (check all that apply): "Building more housing... *

- ...reduces rents and home prices."
- ...reduces displacement pressures."
- ...improves race and class equity."
- ...supports a robust, durable, and growing economy."
- ...is essential for providing a safe haven for marginalized groups fleeing states with oppressive laws.

Comment / Please explain

12. The PA State Housing Action Plan calls for 450,000 new units by 2035. In your view, what is the single greatest barrier * to meeting this goal in Pennsylvania?

- Restrictive local zoning (e.g. single-family-only mandates, parking minimums)
- Insufficient government subsidy for affordable housing
- High construction costs
- Other:

Comment / Please explain

13. Several housing supply bills have recently been introduced in the General Assembly. Please indicate your position on each: *

| | Support | Oppose |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| HB 2185 – Legalize duplexes, triplexes & fourplexes in all single-family zones statewide | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B 2155 – Prohibit municipal parking minimums statewide | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HB 2186 – Remove barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) statewide | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HB 2109 – The Golden Girls Law (legalize unrelated adults sharing a home) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HB 2192 – Creation of a statewide Housing Council | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) upzoning near high-frequency transit stations (memo, Rep. Inglis) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment / Please explain

14. Pennsylvania currently only authorizes 2nd and 3rd class cities and boroughs to enact split-rate property tax (AKA land value tax), whereby property taxes are shifted from buildings to land. Do you support expanding this authorization to all Pennsylvania municipalities? *

- Yes
- No
- Other: _____

Comment / Please explain

15. Philadelphia sees over 1,000 overdose deaths annually. Do you support prohibiting municipalities from using land use ^{*} regulations (such as zoning restrictions or councilmanic prerogative) to block evidence-based harm reduction facilities, including safe injection/overdose prevention sites, from operating in appropriate locations?

Yes — land use should not be used to block harm reduction facilities

No — municipalities should retain this authority

Other:

Comment / Please explain

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CLOSING STATEMENT

16. State legislators from Philadelphia represent the densest, most transit-dependent, and most pedestrian-active ^{*} constituencies in Pennsylvania — yet many colleagues from suburban and rural districts have little exposure to urbanism. How would you build relationships and make the case for pro-transit, pro-housing, and pro-safety policies among legislators from outside our region?

As I seek a fifth term, I've learned that progress in Harrisburg starts with relationships and shared interests. I take time to understand what matters to colleagues from suburban and rural districts, then connect those priorities to ours.

Transit, housing, and safety aren't just urban issues. They're about workforce access, economic growth, and infrastructure efficiency statewide. I also find that bringing colleagues into our communities helps turn abstract ideas into real-world understanding.

Ultimately, I focus on practical partnerships and making clear that strong cities strengthen the entire Commonwealth.

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17. Is there anything not covered above that you would like 5th Square members to know about your candidacy or your ^{*} approach to urbanist issues?

I have sought the endorsement of 5th square each year I have run for re-election, and it would be an honor to receive your support again this cycle.

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Please click "Submit" below to submit your responses.

Thank you for completing our questionnaire! 5th Square members look forward to learning more about your candidacy. Policy responses will be published at www.5thsq.org — contact/financial data will not be published.

