



Dear friends of 15th Suffolk/Norfolk District communities in JP, Mission Hill, Rosi, and Brookline,

We've nearly reached the end of our first recess! This year's been so exciting! I've had the joy of many incredible jobs, but being your State Rep tops all. I feel made for this. My colleagues are amazing and incredible to work with. I love the wheeling and dealing. I love the work, from district relations to policy problems. I love the organizing. And I especially love my constituents. What an incredible gift and honor to serve you in this way. This 1st Newsletter is a broad overview of our launch into the State House and the district and also lists some ways to get involved. Please feel free to give us a call if you'd like to learn more. Our contact info is below.

Getting Our Office Up and Running: A Legislative Machine!

Housing, Health Care and Education form the core of our legislative priorities. Climate and Immigration Justice round out our policy platform. I often refer to these two as our policy "emergencies," because the federal government is dismantling our nation's already conservative policies. We need all 160 state representative districts to work together to ensure Massachusetts sets a strong progressive standard in these two areas in particular.

Our office strategically focused our filing priorities in areas where we need even more boldly progressive champions, including **Housing, Revenue, Denuclearization and Indigenous Justice**. We filed and co-filed 15 bills. We **cosponsored over 430 bills** across a broad array of policy areas where a number of progressive champions take the lead in the House. **Topics range from Animal Welfare to Wetlands Protection**. Now we follow these bills through the legislative process, sometimes standing with the filer in support at the hearing and sometimes providing oral and/or written testimony.

We filed **5 housing bills, with priorities in affordable housing promotion and development, elder homeowner and tenant housing affordability, and tenant protections**. We've invested enormous resources, research and organizing into our Land Equity bill H3562, and I'm very proud of our July Hearing and the results so far. Contact our office to learn how to track bills.



In budget season we **filed ten budget amendments and cosponsored over 300, ranging from Education to Homelessness Reduction to Youth Development!** The FY 2020 budget passed in late July. Early June is more typical. This was partly because legislators were fiercely advocating in both the House and Senate right up to the end. Our office got awesome line items, including **\$10 Million for libraries and \$200 K for the Big Sisters girls'** mentoring program. Many of our cosponsored amendments also passed.

In April we were the last team to get an office. It was so worth the wait! Visit us **in Room 448**, close to the State House Library and the Cafe, and right up the stairs from House Chambers. We love the sunny space and our suite mates, the Personnel Committee, chaired by **Rep Frank Moran**, and **Rep Christina Minicucci** from Merrimack Valley and her team! I'm grateful to have been assigned my top choice Committees: **Elder Affairs; Arts, Tourism & Culture; Children Families & Persons with Disabilities; and Technology & Intergovernmental Affairs.**

In addition to policy priorities, our policy agenda includes promoting legislation that protects and empowers **five special underrepresented populations: children and youth up to age 26, elders (self-identifying), LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities (including behavioral and intellectual), and people who are incarcerated.** I try to cosponsor and support related legislation whenever I become aware of it. My Committee assignments offer a special lens on key legislation that impacts these groups. Our office does extra outreach and works to be a strong advocate to members of these groups, whether or not they live in our district. We have especially **strong relationships with LGBTQ+ Elders of Color and the African American Coalition, a leadership board of inmate activists at MCI-Norfolk.**



We've had 6 amazing fellows, 4 incredible interns, and a number of faithful volunteers, who increase our capacity through quality research, policy and budget analysis, data entry, writing, copy editing, social media, survey development, business and community outreach, constituent service response, and much more. **Isabel**, my single staffer and legislative aide, in addition to doing the work of ten staffers, has taken the lead in establishing our rigorous program, which runs January through August. She's become a superb manager, despite limited resources.

In the District: Learning, Serving and Facilitating Access and Partnership

Our district neighborhoods of Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roslindale, and Brookline are each vibrant and diverse. **Our vision is to contribute to uniting our neighbors across age, income, and culture** while promoting local volunteerism, philanthropy and a deeper connection to local government. I see my role as **"your neighbor in government."** Isabel and I attend or host on average about 20 district meetings a week (plus lots of policy and advocacy meetings). I spend most of my energy in the district trying to build bridges and increase access from our neighborhoods to the State House and to my colleagues in local and State Government. We are also learning how to better support our public housing residents and local businesses.

From our conversations with thousands of constituents last summer, we identified **3 district priorities for constituents for 2019: Housing, Public Safety and Workforce Development** (especially for youth and elders). Our district-based housing work so far has focused mainly on **supporting our public housing developments and our housing for elder and disability communities, as well as the tenants who lead organizing efforts there.**

We have a close relationship with **District Attorney Rachael Rollins** and with our community and housing police, especially in J.P. Our office has recently started working closely with the **Mayor Walsh** and his cabinet, and a number of other partners, to connect constituents to job opportunities, especially in the City of Boston. **We also work with the City, local leaders, and Boston Electeds of Color on trauma response.** We're learning how to do this not just after a violent incident, but on an ongoing basis, including by providing practical resources and support to the impacted of all ages. **The Town of Brookline has been a delight to work with on issues of equity, housing and education, in particular. The Select Board, Brookline Housing Authority, and Brookline School Committee are particularly helpful and welcoming,** and I enjoy partnering with the fun-spirited and sharp **Brookline Rep, Tommy Vitolo.**



Rozzie



Brookline



JP



Mission Hill

Our Growth Areas for the Fall

It's challenging to have just the two of us to do so much. While I'm so excited about what we've learned, we have some real growth edges in communications especially. I am working towards greater consistency on social media and new Team Nika volunteers are helping to bolster our web, social media and newsletter communications and consistency. We've been trying to regularly contribute to our local community papers, with more success in recent months. Our goal is to publish 2 articles per month from Team Nika or me.

We've been developing a map of our public and affordable housing developments, schools, community and neighborhood organizations, elder serving facilities and living spaces, and public safety locations. Our first six months we prioritized responding to those who were proactive about reaching out to us. For a while, we had hundreds of scheduling calls and invitations each week, and we have gotten into a good rhythm for fielding and responding to those, thanks to Isabel. It is my hope to become more regular about rotating visits to the groups that don't reach out as frequently, or haven't at all. The same goes for staying on top of local events, except for policy and advocacy related ones, which I think have been a strength.

Opportunities to get engaged

I hope you'll join Team Nika at our end of Summer/Fall events! We have a few coming up. Email isabel.torres@mahouse.gov or call us at 617-722-2582 to RSVP for any of the events below or to sign up for a specific volunteer training related to items in "Other Ways to Get Involved."

Upcoming Team Nika Events

- JP-Rozzie Walk-n-Roll, Tentative Date Sept 21st/Backup Date Sept 28 (see attached filer)
- Back of the Hill Disability Community Ally Ride-Along/Walk-n-Roll (Date TBD)
- Small Business Canvass/Interviews (throughout September and October)

Other Ways to Get Involved

- Card writing to constituents
- Communications (writing for local papers, editing, newsletter support, outreach to elder facilities, businesses, and schools)
- Community Events (identifying and/or attending)
- Community Acknowledgments (watching the local paper for stories to follow up on)
- Invite me to your child's school (through appropriate channels at the school)
- Recommend interns and fellows
- Door knocking (residents and businesses)

Yours truly,
Rep Nika

Representative Nika Elugardo
Serving 15th Suffolk/Norfolk District communities in Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill, Roslindale and Brookline

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Boston, MA, 02133
617-722-2582

[Office Web Site](#) (to view filed and cosponsored legislation)

[ElectNika.com](#)

If you have questions or want more information, please contact Isabel.torres@mahouse.gov.

Follow us on social media!

