

# Chang-Díaz Makes It Official: She's Going For Governor

By Katie Lannan

State House News Service

Jamaica Plain Democrat Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz plans to officially jump into next year's gubernatorial contest on Wednesday, launching her campaign with a knock on "Beacon Hill insiders" she describes as lacking urgency.

The first Latina elected to the state Senate and currently the only woman of color serving in the body, Chang-Díaz is rolling out a campaign video that touts legislative accomplishments around education funding and criminal justice reform.

"Those wins didn't come easy. Beacon Hill insiders dragged their feet every step of the way, saying 'think smaller.' Instead, we fought unapologetically for the things working families actually need," she says, according to the video's script. "They said our ideas were impossible, we made them the law. The trouble is: that kind of urgency in our state government is still the exception rather than the rule. Too many leaders are more interested in keeping power than in doing something with it."

Chang-Díaz joins a Democratic field that so far includes Harvard professor Danielle Allen and former Sen. Ben Downing, whose time on Beacon Hill overlapped with hers. On the Republican side, Gov. Charlie Baker has not yet said if he plans to seek a third term.

A former teacher, Chang-Díaz has served in the state Senate since 2009 and ran unopposed in her last two races. She co-chairs the Cannabis Policy Committee and the Joint Committee on Racial Equity, Civil Rights and Inclusion.

Along with stops in Springfield and Worcester, a campaign aide said Chang-Díaz plans to hold a kickoff event Wednesday afternoon outside Boston's English High School, the site where Baker in 2019 signed a school funding reform law known as the Student Opportunity Act.

Chang-Díaz authored one of the bills that became the basis for that \$1.5 billion law – which has not yet been implemented – and had pushed for years for an overhaul of the funding formula to better account for costs associated with teaching low-income students and English learners, special education and employee health care.

In the Senate, Chang-Díaz has been a voice for progressive causes from criminal justice reform to the more recent policing accountability law Baker signed last year. She was among the lead negotiators of the police reform bill and has also recently advocated for efforts to ensure greater equity in the state's COVID-19 vaccination strategy.

In her video, Chang-Díaz discusses her family background, saying her mom was a social worker and her dad an immigrant who became NASA's first Latino astronaut.

"If my mom can spend a lifetime helping kids escape poverty, surely Massachusetts can pass a Millionaires Tax to help more children get a better start in life," she says. "If America can send a poor kid from Costa Rica to space, surely Massachusetts can green our infrastructure and close the racial wealth divide."

More than a year ahead of the 2022 Democratic primary, the contest centers around candidates from the Boston area – Chang-Díaz lives in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood and her Senate district also includes parts of Dorchester, Hyde Park, Mattapan, Mission Hill, Roslindale, Roxbury, and the South End. Downing, who represented the Berkshires in the Senate, now lives in East Boston, and Allen resides in Cambridge.

Allen, the first Black woman to seek the Massachusetts governorship as a major party candidate, formally launched her campaign last week, critiquing a “pretty rocky start” on vaccinations and saying Massachusetts needs an “administration that sees the leadership ideas, the solutions that are emerging from the ground and invest in those, helps to scale them up.”

Downing, who in February was the first gubernatorial hopeful to declare, also did so with a call for urgency from Beacon Hill and criticism of the vaccine rollout. He’s said that, if elected, he would be “constantly pushing” his former colleagues in the Legislature for progress on issues including climate change, economic justice and racial equity.

Chang-Díaz announced in late March that she was “seriously considering” a run for governor. The next month, she took in more than \$21,000 in donations, and as of May 31 her campaign account’s balance stood at almost \$203,165, landing so far in the middle of the pack among declared Democrats.

While she was mulling it over, a “Draft Sonia Chang-Díaz” campaign circulated online, arguing, “In this critical time, Massachusetts needs a governor like Sonia Chang-Díaz to lead a movement of progressive change from the corner office, fighting for justice and equity across the Commonwealth.”

State Rep. Nika Elugardo was among those to say they’d signed the petition.

Allen’s campaign has about \$283,279 in the bank, and Downing’s \$111,399, according to the Office of Campaign and Political Finance.

Contributions that flowed in since Chang-Díaz first floated her bid include \$250 from 2014 gubernatorial hopeful Donald Berwick, \$100 from 2018 Congressional candidate Alexandra Chandler, and \$1,000 from a former Senate colleague, Cape Air CEO Daniel Wolf.

Baker has more than \$484,000 on hand, and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito's balance is above \$2 million, including the more than \$47,800 she collected in May.

Chang-Díaz is not the only state senator eyeing a statewide run in 2022. Sen. Diana DiZoglio, a Methuen Democrat, is running for auditor, and others are said to be considering campaigns for higher office.

In the House, Rep. Tami Gouveia, an Acton Democrat, announced her run for lieutenant governor earlier this month.