

TO: The Leadership of the Massachusetts Democratic Party (MDP)  
FROM: The Berkshire Democratic Brigades (BDB) Steering Committee  
RE: The MDP Leadership and the 2020 Primary in the First Congressional District (MA-1)

In the final weeks of a contested Democratic primary in MA-1, at least three members of the MDP leadership had direct and repeated meetings with students from Massachusetts College Democrats. Soon after, the students leaked a letter that predictably and seriously damaged the candidacy of Alex Morse, which had been posing an increasingly powerful grassroots challenge to a longtime incumbent. Regardless of their motives, Democratic Party officials should have pulled back as soon as it became clear that the students were seeking advice about their relationship with a primary candidate in the upcoming election. Whether or not they suggested the eventual leak, by continuing these conversations the officials broke an important MDP by-law that proscribes their interference in a contested primary.

After Congressman Neal won the primary, over a hundred elected town and ward committee members, as well as some from the State Committee, formally complained to the MDP leadership about these actions. They called for an independent, transparent investigation, which was duly completed by former State Senator Cheryl Jacques. Her report concluded that MDP by-laws had indeed been violated. However, this finding was not released prior to a pivotal State Committee meeting on November 12, 2020, at which Chairman Gus Bickford sought re-election. Nor was the report officially released to the public.

Yet the storm did not pass. Over 500 Massachusetts Democrats filed official complaints asking for the removal or censure of the MDP leadership involved in the incident. These complaints were supposed to have been addressed immediately by Mr. Bickford, yet they sat for months, later to be thrown out as "frivolous." The complaining members never received the courtesy of a response. In short, after giving their time and money to elect a progressive Democrat, they were left feeling cheated and disrespected. Should it surprise us that they have become alienated from the party?

Moreover, among the broader public, the UMass episode left a blemish on the Massachusetts Democratic Party, exposing it to charges of homophobia and dirty politics.

Today, Massachusetts Democrats face many challenges—above all, winning the race for Governor in 2022. We need unity, and the party needs the energy and commitment of those who have disengaged as a result of these events. To win them back, we need State Party leaders to conduct themselves in a transparent manner, embodying integrity.

Here is our request. Many Democrats here who supported Morse's candidacy, and some who did not, feel that Alex Morse deserves a formal, written apology from the MDP leadership. We, the Steering Committee of the Berkshire Democratic Brigades, agree. We also believe that the party members who took the time and energy to follow the official complaint process deserve a

reply from the MDP leadership. Failing these actions, we would support the official censure of Gus Bickford, Jim Roosevelt, and Veronica Martinez for their violations of party by-laws.