

[Homepage](#) 

# Needham psychologist Sara Orozco braces for State Senate run

By Steven Ryan

Wed Mar 05, 2008, 02:07 PM EST

- [Tools:](#)
- [E-Mail](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Share](#)

NEEDHAM - Sara Orozco's life has been a series of challenges — from growing up in Miami in a financially strapped household to surviving breast cancer. Now the Needham psychologist is ready to take on a new challenge as she plans to run against Sen. Scott Brown, R-Wrentham, for his Senate seat.

“I work hard when I have a goal in mind,” Orozco said. “I had to prove myself at every point.”

As both a parent and a medical professional, Orozco decided to run for the state Senate after her frustration with issues such as health care and education bothered her so much that she decided she wants lead the charge in those areas.

“Instead of waiting around from someone to fix it, I would do it myself,” Orozco said. “My biggest frustration is how little people are getting from health care and how much they're paying. People have to pay out of pocket. The system leaves people in economic dire straits.”

As for education, Orozco feels children should receive a more “balanced” education and believes there should be more emphasis on arts and physical activities, noting how her two third-graders, who attend Needham schools, are already feeling stressed.

“Education is more than just about taking tests,” Orozco said.

Having spent more than 20 years in health care and human services, Orozco currently has a private psychology practice in Needham. She is the founder and CEO of Orozco & Associates, a Needham-based consulting firm made up of independent corporate psychologists and business consultants who work within companies to transform workplace relationships and to provide leadership training.

Orozco feels her skills as a psychologist are invaluable as she runs for office and would be a great asset if she is elected.

“I think what I bring to the table is my ability to listen — to really be able to listen to what people are saying,” Orozco said. “I work in a field in which I am constantly listening and finding solutions.”

Elena Kouri, who worked with Orozco at the McLean Hospital in Belmont, said she was initially surprised when she found out her friend, who has never run for political office, was planning to enter the state Senate race.

“After my initial surprise, I didn't find it so shocking because she is so passionate,” Kouri said.

Kouri described how Orozco would take charge of research projects when they were both doing clinical research at

McLean Hospital, pursuing scientific questions that weren't already planned out.

"She's a very tenacious person and is very passionate about every aspect of her life," Kouri said.

Orozco's parents emigrated from Cuba in 1961, and Orozco was born two years later in Miami. She said she never realized how tough her family had it until after she grew up and came back to where she spent her childhood.

"Most people will say we lived in a low socioeconomic area," Orozco said. "But somehow they made me think we had enough. I am fortunate to live with what I have now and for my children to have what they have now. I want to fight for people to have that opportunity to have those things."

Orozco majored in both communication and psychology at the University of North Carolina in Asheville, where she was on a volleyball scholarship. Orozco earned her doctorate in psychology at Georgia State University in 1993 and completed her post-doctoral training at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., before accepting an academic appointment at Harvard Medical School.

"I dreamed of coming to Massachusetts and working at Harvard Medical School and be part of that academic world,"

Orozco said about her reasons for settling in Massachusetts.

Perhaps Orozco's biggest challenge was when she was diagnosed with breast cancer 10 years ago, when she was 35.

"I was shocked," Orozco said. "I don't even get colds and now I have breast cancer ... My darkest moment was the thought I was going to die. I dreamed of too many things. There was a tremendous amount of sadness thinking I was going to leave without doing so much more. "

Orozco attributes her emotional recovery to meeting women who survived cancer, and she feels her physical recovery is due to the level of health care available in Massachusetts and her ability to tap into those resources with the insurance she had at the time. Ten years later, her tests, which are performed every six months, continue to come back clean.

"Every six months, I get to re-evaluate my life," Orozco said. "I get to ask myself, 'Are you living life according to your passions?'"

*Steven Ryan can be reached at [sryan@cnc.com](mailto:sryan@cnc.com).*