



## **Indivisible HoCoMD 2019-2020 Annual Report**

### **I Introduction**

The 2016 election mobilized progressive activists and groups throughout the country. The Indivisible Movement began in December 2016 when two Congressional staffers posted an online handbook to guide resistance to the Trump presidency. Since then, local Indivisible groups have been established nationwide.

Indivisible HoCoMD started modestly with a house meeting in Columbia in January 2017 attended by 37 people. Since then, we have grown to a functioning organization with more than 700 people on the mailing list, 5 active Action Teams, 2 Administrative Teams, a website, a Facebook page with public and private pages, a Twitter account, and weekly e-mail calls to action. Our mission is to build a fairer, more compassionate democracy. Our membership meetings draw prominent speakers including Senator Chris Van Hollen, Congressmen Elijah Cummings, John Sarbanes, and Dutch Ruppersberger, Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, and Indivisible co-founders Leah Greenberg, and Ezra Levin. Indivisible HoCoMD members have joined national marches and local rallies, organized town halls, registered new voters, lobbied elected officials, sent thousands of postcards, and fought for progressive legislation at the local, state, and national level.

### **II Status of Indivisible HoCoMD**

Indivisible HoCo MD is reaching more people in the county and beyond. Our mailing list has grown steadily from 181 in March 2017 to 735 in December 2020.

Indivisible HoCoMD now has 6 Action Teams and 2 Administrative Teams. (See Appendix A for a list of Action Teams and Facilitators.)

#### **Action Teams**

- Climate Action (formerly Energy and Transportation)
- Defend Democracy (formerly Conflicts of Interest)
- Economic Equity (new in 2020)
- Education
- Immigration
- Red2Blue

#### **Administrative Teams**

- Communications
- New Member Outreach

Three teams that were active in 2018, Health, Aging and People with Disabilities, and Less Plastic Please became inactive in 2019.

#### Social Media Presence:

- IndivisibleHoCoMD communicates actions to its members through e-mail Updates and occasional Action Alerts. The Updates were sent 2-3 times a week in 2017, then weekly for most of 2018-2020, and will be biweekly in 2021. We have 735 subscribers as of the end of 2020 with an average e-mail open rate of 43%. Our emails are frequently forwarded, increasing our reach.
- The IndivisibleHoCoMD website <https://www.indivisiblehocomd.org/> was set up in March 2017. Our website changed its look and management in January 2018, adopting a new platform shared with other Indivisible groups nationwide. There were 8,695 visits to the website 2019 and 12,283 in 2020.
- The IndivisibleHoCoMD Facebook page was set up in February 2017. Currently, the private Facebook site has 229 members. During the last two months of 2020 we had 69 posts on the private Facebook site with 145 comments or reactions. Of our 229 members, 176 were engaged during the last two months of 2020. The Public Facebook Page had 943 engagements for the last month of 2020 with 476 likes during that month.
- Indivisible HoCoMD set up a Twitter account (@indivisiblehoco) in March 2017. Currently, our Twitter account has 1,090 followers. We sent out 2,448 tweets in 2018. For the month of December 2020, there were 17,700 impressions with an engagement rate of 2.5%, that is, someone else commenting on or retweeting a tweet.
- We added an Instagram account in October 2019. We have 134 followers. Our largest age group is 25-34, and 55% of readers are women. For the last week in January 2020, our post reach was 658.
- In 2019 and 2020 the Communications Team held 9 meetings to orient new members. Red2Blue leaders helped to engage new members in election efforts. The first in-person meeting had 20 participants; the following 8 virtual meetings each had 5 to 10 participants.

### **III Major activities/accomplishments in 2019**

Indivisible HoCoMD members were very active in 2019 and 2020 to promote a progressive agenda including community outreach, marches and demonstrations, and lobbying with county and state elected officials.

#### ***Education/community outreach***

Action Teams have worked to inform community members through meetings, topic-specific presentations, and the dissemination of informational materials.

- The Defend Democracy Action Team:
  - Held a forum on August 13, 2019, on Howard County and State Boards of Elections' efforts to ensure fair and secure elections. The forum featured Guy Mickley, Director of the Howard County Board of Elections
  - Sponsored a forum on the electoral college, attended by about 20 people

- Posted information materials on campaign financing reform, redistricting/gerrymandering, and the electoral college on the IndivisibleHoCoMD website.
- The Education Action Team:
  - In May 2019, hosted a *Public Education Funding 101: How does it work?*, attended by about 40 people
  - In September 2019 hosted an *Equity in Redistricting* forum, attended by about 95 people
  - In 2020 hosted a *Meet our Endorsed Board of Education Candidates* forum on Saturday, September 12, attended by about 45 people.
- The Immigration Action Team:
  - Prepared a PowerPoint presentation, *Understanding the Immigration Debate*, with national and Maryland information. From 2017 through 2020, the Team gave 23 presentations that reached approximately 900 people in a variety of venues including the League of Women Voters, churches, and several assisted living facilities.
  - Continued publication of a weekly Immigration Newsletter listing significant news and feature articles on immigration from a wide range of established and independent media outlets. These lists are e-mailed to 96 subscribers and posted on the Indivisible HoCoMD website (<https://indivisiblehocomd.org/action-teams/immigration/immigration-news/>).
  - In July 2019, co-sponsored the Lights for Liberty Event with St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, as part of a national movement to build support for immigrants. About 750 people attended and donated \$5,000 for a legal defense fund for immigrants.
  - Collaborated with the Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice (HCCIJ) to host a Town Hall, attended by over 200 people.
- The Less Plastic Please (LPP) Action Team:
  - Provided information at community and environmental events including Greenfest, Electric Vehicle Week, Earth Forum, and HCC's Sustainability Day
  - Hosted a website on reducing plastic consumption: <https://www.facebook.com/lessplastichocomd/>
  - Collected t-shirts to make into reusable shopping bags, conducted bag-making workshops, and provided bags free to the public with the support of a local grocery store, LA Mart.
  - Won the Howard County Green Community Leadership Award at Greenfest 2019. This award recognizes a Howard County-based community group or organization that demonstrates efforts, projects, or programs that help protect Howard County's natural environment and preserve its resources.

- The Red to Blue Team created a Citizenship 101 civic seminar which was presented in-person in February and virtually in April 2020 for the Howard County Sunrise Earth Day Celebration and again in July for Howard Community College Sustainability Day.

***Political Action: Howard County and Maryland***

- The Defend Democracy Team:
  - Lobbied and testified in front of the Maryland Legislature in support of bills to protect voting rights and enhance voter access, implement campaign finance reform and demand special elections for General Assembly vacancies; contributed to the passing of Election Day Voter Registration in 2019.
  - Participated in voter registration drives with the League of Women Voters
  - In 2019 organized protests in Columbia attended by 200 people to support the Mueller investigation and Trump impeachment
  - In 2020 lobbied the Maryland Board of Elections and Governor Hogan to ensure fair and safe elections in 2020
- The Education Action Team:
  - Participated in the Maryland State Education Association March for Our Schools Rally in Annapolis on March 11, 2019
  - Lobbied with Strong Schools Maryland on March 25, 2019 for full funding of the Kirwan Commission recommendations.
- The Climate Action Team:
  - Lobbied state legislators and provided oral and written testimony on multiple energy and transportation bills at state legislative committee hearings in 2019 and 2020. In 2019, this work led to the passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, requiring that half of Maryland’s energy come from renewable sources by 2030.
- The Immigration Action Team:
  - Continued demonstrations on Gorman Road and Little Patuxent Parkway on Friday nights and Saturday mornings to raise public awareness of immigrant rights and concerns.
  - To protest the County’s contract with ICE to detain immigrants in the County jail, team members:
    - Met multiple times with Howard County Council members and the Howard County Maryland state delegation to garner support for ending the Howard County contract
    - Joined the Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice (HCCIJ) and participated in multiple demonstrations at the County offices, the County Detention Center and elsewhere
    - Organized petition drives, mobilized people to contact their county council members, and testified before the County Council on two bills
    - Published more than five letters to the editor in the Howard County Times and Columbia Flyer supporting immigrant-friendly legislation.

- The Less Plastics Please Action Team:
  - Successfully lobbied to get a bill introduced and passed (on the first try) in the Maryland General Assembly to allow Howard County to impose a plastic bag fee
  - Lobbied to support a bill requiring a 5-cent fee for plastic bags, passed by the Howard County Council in December 2019.

***Political Action: National***

- Indivisible Action Teams and individual members have participated in many national and state marches.
- The Defend Democracy Action Team:
  - Organized protests in Columbia in support of the Mueller investigation and impeachment. Two hundred people attended a rally on December 2019.
  - Organized a rally in August 2020 in support of the US Post Office; wrote to our senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress to urge them to pass legislation and authorize funding for the U.S.P.S.
  - With support from the Defend Democracy and Red2Blue teams, IndivisibleHoCoMd hosted a Protest the Results Rally on November 4, 2020 in collaboration with Indivisible National and more than 100 other liberal and progressive organizations to protect the legitimate results of the 2020 General Election. Approximately 100 people participated, including several County and State elected officials. The *Baltimore Sun* published an article about the rally which was reprinted in the *Howard County Times*.
- The Immigration Action Team:
  - Set up the “Where are the Children” installation on the National Mall on June 9, 2019, protesting the separation of immigrant children from their families; the event was endorsed by Congressman Elijah Cummings and other national and state elected officials. The installation displayed 1,000 pajamas, each representing a separated child.
  - A video of the “Where are the Children” installation was disseminated on various websites, Facebook pages, and YouTube and also sent to organizations working for family reunification. The video has also been shown at Bowie University and at Democratic groups in several states.
  - Met with Kweisi Mfume’s office to discuss ending Howard County’s contract with ICE.
- The Red2BlueAction Team
  - In 2019, the Red2Blue Action Team knocked on doors, phone banked, and wrote postcards to Democratic/Independent voters in Virginia to help elect Joshua Cole, the youngest person to serve in the Virginia House of Delegates. The Postcard Brigade wrote postcards in support of candidates identified through Postcards to Voters.
  - In 2020, organized Squads to support democratic candidates for 2020 elections for President and the Senate in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Kentucky.
  - Team members made about 10,000 phone calls and text messages for candidates in collaboration with local organizations.

- Team members adopted three races in South-Central Pennsylvania (House of Representatives, State Senate, and State Legislature) and conducted in-person voter registration and voter education on early voting and mail-in ballots, and canvassed in York and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in collaboration with the local Democratic Clubs.
- Served as both early and election day Poll Observers in York and Chester Counties Pennsylvania
- Staffed the Pennsylvania Voter Hotline to solve problems with ballots and help voters maneuver the last-minute changes in election rules
- In 2020, the Postcard Brigade of Howard County volunteers sent more than 103,000 postcards to voters in Polk County, Florida, South Central Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

### ***Local impact-Howard County***

- The Less Plastic Please Action Team:
  - Worked with the Howard County State delegation and the County Council to pass a Howard County bill requiring a 5-cent fee for plastic bags. The new law went into effect in February 2020.
  - With the support of the Climate and Sustainability Committee and other environmental groups, convinced the Columbia Association Board to declare a Climate Emergency in September 2019.
- The Immigration Action Team and HCCIJ activism led to:
  - County Council Representative Elizabeth Walsh sponsoring CB59 to terminate the County’s contract with ICE. The bill passed the Council 3-2, but County Executive Calvin Ball vetoed it immediately.
  - County Council Representative Opel Jones sponsoring CB63 (The Liberty Act) to limit County employees and contractors’ collaboration with ICE and to prevent discrimination against immigrants. The bill passed the Council 4-1 and was rapidly signed into law.
  - County Executive Calvin Ball revising county policy with the ICE contract to allow only immigrants who were convicted of and served their sentences for violent crimes, greatly limiting the criteria for accepting detainees.
  - Testifying before and successfully lobbying the Howard County Human Rights Commission to include immigration status as a protected class.

## **IV 2021 Planned Activities**

The overall goals for Indivisible HoCoMD for 2021 are to:

- Enact the reforms described in HR-1, HR-4, and HR-51 and similar legislation at the local, state, and national level to protect all citizens’ right to vote, enhance voter access, and ensure fairness and equal representation in elections
- Take action to democratize the media and hold it accountable to provide truthful balanced information to the public

- Enact laws and policies to ensure racial justice, fair treatment of immigrants, universal access to affordable healthcare, education and economic opportunity, and an aggressive response to the Climate Emergency
- Increase the number of elected representatives who support democracy.

### **Action Team plans for 2021 are listed below:**

#### **Climate Change**

Mission: To advocate state and local governments to take decisive action to address climate change.

Contact Richard Deutschmann ([rdeutschmann2@gmail.com](mailto:rdeutschmann2@gmail.com)); Barbara Matheson ([barbaramatheson@verizon.net](mailto:barbaramatheson@verizon.net))

Activities for 2021:

- Legislative Action targeted toward the following:
  - Climate Solutions Now Act to create a mandatory framework for state government to follow scientific evidence in reaching Net Zero carbon emissions by 2045
  - Transit Safety & Investment Act, which provides sufficient funding for the long-term capital needs required to achieve a state of good repair for all MTA modal components, with a roadmap for replacement of obsolete vehicles with electric vehicles
  - Environmental Justice to rectify problems in communities most impacted by climate crisis and toxic pollution by mandating the Department of Environment identify impacted communities, establish processes for remediation, develop diversified panels to address job security during transition to new green systems, and establish funding for green energy and minority business and communities working in green businesses
  - Sustainable practices related to incineration, waste solutions, plastic reduction, and stringent energy efficiency requirements for remodeled and new buildings
  - Electric vehicle incentives such as rebates and discounts for charging stations; measures that encourage the conversion of transit, school buses and state fleets to zero emissions.
- Coalition Building: The Climate Action Team is dedicated to building strong relationships with other environmental groups such as Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Maryland League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Howard County Climate Action and others. This provides a dynamic political movement of over 75,000 coalition members.

## **Defend Democracy**

Mission: Defend the Democracy of the United States: In our country and throughout the world, democratic values are under assault. The Defend Democracy team is committed to educating ourselves and others about the challenges we face and promoting and participating in actions that support and defend democratic values.

Contact: Christine Lemyze ([clemuze@hotmail.com](mailto:clemuze@hotmail.com)); Carole O’Keeffe ([okeeffecarolann@aol.com](mailto:okeeffecarolann@aol.com))

### Activities for 2021

- Support the goals of the For the People Act of 2019 (H.R. #1) at the federal and state levels, including:
  - Ensuring fair elections: improving access, promoting integrity, ensuring security
  - Ending the dominance of big money in politics: guarantee disclosure, empower citizens, strengthen oversight
  - Ensuring public officials work in the public interest: fortify ethics law, impose greater ethics enforcement
- Support the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act (H.R.4), to reverse the discriminatory practices and restrictive voting laws caused by the Shelby County v. Holder Supreme Court decision.
- Support the Washington DC Admission Act (H.R.51), for statehood of Washington DC.

## **Economic Equity**

Mission: To build a local, state, and national economy that works for all people.

Contact: Hiruy Hadgu ([hadguhiruy@gmail.com](mailto:hadguhiruy@gmail.com))

### Activities for 2021

- Ensuring that zoning laws and land-use policies in Howard County are fair and benefit all Howard County residents. This includes opposing zoning laws that favor developers over residents, tax increment financing and tax breaks that benefit special interests and shortchange community needs, and affordable housing exemptions that hurt the poor.
- Giving value to work by supporting state level Fight for Fifteen legislation.
- Fighting the concentration of economic and political power that is undermining our democracy by supporting consumer protection and antimonopoly legislation at the national level.

## **Education**

Contact: Laurie Chin [SpeechGirlN@verizon.net](mailto:SpeechGirlN@verizon.net)

Mission: Inform the community about threats to public education from the current administration and identify action steps that promote respect, fairness, opportunity, and funding for all students.

Contact: Laurie Chin, [SpeechGirlN@Verizon.net](mailto:SpeechGirlN@Verizon.net)

### Activities for 2021:

- Fight legislation that earmarks public money for private school vouchers
- Protect the voting rights of our HCPSS Student Member of the Board of Education
- Advocate for the safe reopening of schools for all stakeholders



**Immigration**

Mission: Make Howard County a safe and supportive environment for immigrants.

Contact: Laurie Liskin ([lliskin49@gmail.com](mailto:lliskin49@gmail.com)); Roslyn Zinner ([rozzinner@gmail.com](mailto:rozzinner@gmail.com))

Activities for 2021

- Lobby to pass Immigrant-friendly legislation in 2021 legislative session
- Increase public support of immigrants' rights and concerns
- End the Howard County contract with ICE.

**Red2Blue**

Mission: Support the election of liberal, progressive (Democratic) candidates at all levels of government.

Contact: Lynn Foehrkolb, [lfoehrkolb@yahoo.com](mailto:lfoehrkolb@yahoo.com) Tara Carey ([taracarey@hotmail.com](mailto:taracarey@hotmail.com))

Activities for 2021

- Create an election calendar.
- Choose and support races in Virginia for 2021
- Choose and support Governor, Maryland General Assembly, U.S. Senate and House races for Maryland for 2022
- Choose and support races in South Central Pennsylvania for U.S. House and Senate, and 1 or 2 local State Legislative District races for 2022.

**Administrative Team Plans for 2021 are listed below:****Communications**

Mission: To facilitate communication across the Action Teams, with members, and to the community.

Contact: Sharon McClean ([swmcclean@gmail.com](mailto:swmcclean@gmail.com))

Activities for 2021

- Continue to improve email, website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter support
- Continue community educational series to share information, highlight the action teams, and attract new members

**New Member Outreach**

Mission: Introduce new members to IndivisibleHoCoMD and Action Team activities

Contact: Sue Franckel ([suefranckel@gmail.com](mailto:suefranckel@gmail.com)); Judy Rice ([judithrice@gmail.com](mailto:judithrice@gmail.com))