
Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition

January 15, 2026

9:00 - 11:00 am

Hybrid (Howard County Health Department, Heroes A Conference Room and Zoom)

Minutes

Co-chair Present:

Dr. Maura Rossman – Howard County Health Department (HCHD)

Members Present:

Amanda Toohey - Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center (JHHCMC)

Bernice Mbulla – Infinite Legacy

Carla Gates – Reclaiming Health Learning Lab (RHLL)

Chris Miller – Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center (JHHCMC)

Claudette Miranda-Zambrano – Maryland Hunger Solutions

Christopher Smith – Method Fitness and Wellness

Diana Awed – Howard County Commission for Women

Dionne Dyson – Community Member

Ellen Blackwell – Community Member

Erica Taylor – Howard County Office of Children and Families

Erin Anderson – HCHD

Estefani Romero – Aetna

Hannah Robinson – Howard County Office of Emergency Management

Heidi Marine – Chase Brexton Health Care Columbia Center

Jessica Fisher – HCHD

Julie Kwedar – Maryland Highway Safety Office

Karen Sider – Mercy Orthopedics

Kirk Rookwood – Healthy Church

Kristine Nellenbach – Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities

LaTonya Love – HCHD

Lauren Synan – R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center

Linda Ashburn – HCHD

Lisa de Hernández – HCHD

Lois Joellenbeck – HCHD

María Moscoso – Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS)

Matthew Castner – Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center (JHHCMC)

Melissa FitzGibbon – Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)

Natalie Hall – HCHD

Olajumoke Rasak – Aetna Better Health of MD

Patrice Tucker – United HealthCare

Rachel Krut – Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center (JHHCMC)

Rebecca Mitch McKee – Anne Arundel Counseling

Reena Rambharat – HCHD

Richard Amador – HealthCare Access of Maryland

Sadija A. Smiley – Stillborn and Infant Loss Support (SAILS)
 Sherrin Patti – Maryland Relay
 Sierra Ross – HCHD
 Sonya Lloyd – HCHD
 Stacey Ibekweh – Loving Support Center, Inc. (LSC)
 Tabita McKenzie – HCHD, Women, Infant and Children (WIC)
 Tatiana Attipoe – Sisters of Health
 Tavia Patuskay – Columbia Association (CA)
 Tina Laboy- Howard County Office Emergency Management (OEM)
 TreJenae Mack – Central Maryland Area Health Education Center (CMAHEC)
 Vanda Lerdboon – HCHD

Staff Present:

Maribet Rivera-Brute – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 Stephanie Foster – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 María José Candanoza – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 Margia Ahmed – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 Miriam Anderson – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 Nancy Moreno – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
 Rosemarie Jiménez-Rosales – Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition

Topic/Agenda	Discussion	Action / Follow-up
Welcome and Introductions	<p>Ms. Maribet Rivera-Brute, MPH, started the meeting at 9:01am and welcomed everyone virtually and in person to the Full LHIC Meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute set meeting rules (chat box to submit questions, raise virtual hand), housekeeping items and non-recording notification rules. Ms. Rivera-Brute initiated a group icebreaker (New Year resolutions). Group members shared briefly before Ms. Rivera-Brute reviewed the agenda and introduced Dr. Maura Rossman, Director, Howard County Health Department for Welcome and Opening Remarks.</p> <p>Dr. Rossman welcomed in person and virtual members to the Full LHIC meeting and returned the floor to Ms. Rivera-Brute. Ms. Rivera-Brute introduced Mr. Matt Castner to the group before asking for updates from him. Mr. Castner stated that he is reading a book titled “Better Place, Better Time: The Life of the Architect of Columbia,” and shared an anecdote from James Rouse.</p> <p>The agenda for this meeting included the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Remarks & Introductions • Stillborn and Infant Loss Support (SAILS) • Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Updates • HCLHIC Workgroup Updates • Member Announcements, Resource Sharing, and Networking • Next Steps and Wrap-Up <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute introduced Ms. Sadija Smiley, Founder and CEO of Stillborn and Infant Loss Support (SAILS) to the group for her</p>	<p>LHIC website: https://www.hclhlc.org/</p> <p>Link to the Captions: https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=HamiltonRelayRCC-LHIC-MD1374</p>

	presentation.	
Member Presentation	<p>Ms. Smiley introduced herself to the group. Ms. Smiley began with an Introduction of Stillborn and Infant Loss Support (SAILS) community and organization:</p> <p>Introduction to SAILS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why SAILS? – SAILS believe that it is essential to create a nurturing and empathetic environment where families and individuals feel heard, valued, and empowered to navigate their grief journey with dignity, compassion, and hope. • Our history – Ms. Smiley shared that after the loss of her daughter, Ivyanna Salene (stillborn at 36 weeks), she founded SAILS in 2017. SAILS received its 501c3 status in 2019 and on November 13, 2020, SAILS transitioned to their official office space. • Organization Overview – Ms. Smiley described their Logo of a Sailboat, symbolizing their commitment to guiding families through the tumultuous waters of grief on their journey towards healing. Ms. Smiley also shared SAILS' Mission Statement, Vision, Values, Strategic Area and Who They Serve as part of their Organizational Overview and structure. • Programs and Services – include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to Healing (Grief Support) • Healing through Education (Training) • Healing through Community (Awareness) <p>Ms. Smiley reviewed their Referral Process which begins with an interested person visiting their website, completing and submitting the short online referral form. SAILS will contact the referred individual within 2-3 business days.</p> <p>Ways to Support – Ms. Smiley shared various ways to support SAILS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending SAILS Events • Following and sharing SAILS • Donating • Volunteering your time or skills <p>Ms. Smiley thanked the group for their time and shared the ways that they could get in contact with her.</p>	<p>SAILS Website: www.bornintosilence.org</p> <p>Sadija Smiley/SAILS contact info: 410-941-9061 or admin@bornintosilence.org</p>
Member Presentation	<p>Ms. Rivera-Brute then introduced Ms. Tabita McKenzie, RDN, LDN, WIC Director at HCHD.</p> <p>Ms. McKenzie opened by reviewing the following information:</p> <p>What is WIC?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA program run by States and territories (Clinics run by local agencies and non-profits) providing direct nutritional supplementation, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding education and support, and referrals to healthcare and social services 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided to almost 130,000 Marylanders every month • Program has been in existence for over 50 years • WIC Promotes health and healthcare savings <p>Who Gets WIC?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant and Post Partum People • Pregnant and up to 6 weeks after pregnancy • Postpartum people up to 6 months after baby's birth • Breastfeeding people up to baby's first birthday • Infants (Up to their 1st birthday) • Children (Up to their 5th birthday) <p>Who Can apply for WIC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed or unemployed • Immigration status is not asked about and does not impact eligibility. • Married, single or living with parents or family. • Fathers, mothers, grandparents, or guardians can apply for children under age five • You must live in the State of Maryland to be in the Maryland WIC Program • Based on income <p>Ms. McKenzie reviewed the importance of breastfeeding and WIC's commitment to Breastfeeding, shared Breastfeeding aids why breastfeeding matters for infants.</p> <p>Ms. McKenzie reviewed the types of supplemental food WIC provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk • Cereal • Fruits and Vegetables • Dried/canned legumes • Baby foods/Infant cereal • Iron fortified infant formula (for infants who breastfeed some of the time) <p>Ms. McKenzie noted staff available for WIC assistance at the two locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard County Health Department (Columbia) • North Laurel Health Center <p>Ms. McKenzie then noted that the WIC benefits are available by use of an eWic card that works similar to a SNAP/EBT card. She also introduced the MD WIC mobile app as well as ways to apply for WIC benefits.</p> <p>Ms. McKenzie opened the floor up to questions from the group: Community fears applying for WIC benefits; can people receive SNAP and WIC at the same time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, applicants can receive both programs at the same time. Applicants can check income requirements online or when applying <p>Are there age limits for those receiving WIC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIC ends when the child turns 5 years old 	
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Check WIC income guidelines at www.mdwic.org

<p>HCLHIC and Workgroup Updates</p>	<p>Can undocumented pregnant people receive WIC benefits?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes; as long as they apply and are deemed eligible <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute began the 10-minute break for the meeting.</p> <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute began the HCLHIC Workgroup Updates portion that will address the following areas:</p> <p>Healthy Beginnings – Growing Healthy Families Healthy Living – Healthy Lifestyle Workgroup Healthy Minds – Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention Coalition Community Health Worker Learning Collaborative (CHWLC)</p> <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute introduced Ms. Erica Taylor, Growing Healthy Families Co-chair, for updates which included:</p> <p>Women’s Health Focus Groups (Includes 3 focus groups with a total of 17 participants with their next step to create a report).</p> <p>2026 Black Maternal Health Week (April 18, 2026, from 11:00 am-2:00 pm at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center).</p> <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute then provided the updates for the Healthy Lifestyle Workgroup in place of Ms. Michelle Rosenfeld, Office of Aging and Independence and Carrie Ross, Howard County Community Action Council who were not able to attend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued partnerships with Enterprise Residential • Finishing Walktober 2025 with 171 events, with estimated ~4400+ participants across Howard County • HCHD Employee Walktober Challenge finished with 5,082,085 steps or 2,310.04 miles walked in total • Collaboration with Howard Co. Village leaders for the 2025 Walktober Challenge • 5 Howard County Villages joined in the Howard County Village 2025 Walktober Challenge 41 participants with 4,009.50 miles walked in October; Wilde Lake Village winner for 2025 with 18 participants walking 1,672.94 miles in October 1 village expressed interest in joining next year Community members expressed interest in competing again next year <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute then introduced Ms. Jessica Fisher, LCSW-C for updates on the Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention Coalition which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firearms Safe Storage Workshop registration info to be sent by email with a tentative date of March 2026 <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute then introduced Ms. María José Candanoza, MPH, CCHW, HCLHIC and Ms. Amanda Toohey, JHHCMC for the Community Health Worker Learning Collaborative (CHWLC) which included updates on:</p> <p>Community Care Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with 648 cases as part of our Readmission Prevention Program 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screened 4,718 patients at the hospital for Social Determinants of Health • Expanded our partnerships with Community Action Council and neighborhood to best serve patients facing food and transportation insecurity. • Presented at the Medicine for the Greater Good Symposium about Sepsis Intervention and Mobile Integrated Health <p>Community Health Worker Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established partnership with Howard County Public Schools and certified five HS Seniors. Continuing to mentor these students as they have entered the workforce and college. • Expanded Community Health Worker Lunch and Learn network • Certified 56 adult community members <p>Community Engagement, Outreach, Education & Public Health Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in 38 community events, reaching approximately 1,393 community members. • Launched whatsapp communication groups - Columbia and Elkridge. • Integrated outreach by providing tobacco retailer education during CAP engagement visits, completing 25 retailer education visits. <p>Community Asset Profile (CAP) Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed two CT (Elkridge and Columbia – Long Reach) and finalized data collection and validation for Jessup and Columbia – Harper’s Choice, with asset mapping now underway. <p>Photovoice Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully hosted 1st Photovoice Exhibition on November 10, 2025, at the Elkridge Public Library, with approximately 40 community members in attendance. Developed an evaluation report, which will be made publicly available. • Preparing for the Long Reach Photovoice Exhibition scheduled for January 22, 2026, 6:00 – 7:30 PM. <p>Ms. Rivera-Brute then provided updates on the 2026-2028 HCLHIC program that included:</p> <p>Membership Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in membership from 542 (2022) to 711 (2026) indicating steady growth • Total Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage increase: 31% • Annual growth rate: 7% per year • Members were encouraged to share about LHIC with their communities since the Coalition is not only open to organizations. 	<p>Through the Eyes of a Community Health Worker: registration link: bit.ly/CHWEElkridge</p>
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<p>Member Announcements, Resource Sharing and Networking</p>	<p>CHIP Action Plan FY26-28 updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action Plan for the 2nd quarter has been updated. <p>FY26-28 Strategic Plan Summary Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copies are ready for download <p>Reena Rambharat provided the updates for the Howard County Food Council.</p> <p>Howard County Food Council Updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing foundational and policy facing work Awarded the MDH Grant to launch hydroponic growing program in partnership with Howard County Public Schools Held First General Assembly Meeting in November 2025 Attended Legislative Brainstorming Session with Maryland Hunger Solutions Attending Meet and Greet with Maryland Delegation Announced the launch of Pocket Pantry Began identifying steering committee members and will host first steering committee meeting in January 2025 <p>2026 Full LHIC Quarterly meetings (schedule is available now)</p> <p>Howard County 2025 Report of Community Health Indicators is available on the LHIC website.</p> <p>2024 HCHAS Summary is now available on the LHIC website.</p> <p>HCHD WhatsApp Channel</p> <p>To join Elkridge Channel</p> <p>To join Columbia Channel</p> <p>LHIC Digital Content Tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter Content 	<p>HCLHIC Website for Action Plan info: https://www.hclhic.org/community/action-plans/267</p> <p>Download copies of Summary Report: https://www.hclhic.org/community/action-plans/267</p> <p>Printed Copy requests to: lhic@howardcountymd.gov</p> <p>Howard County Food Council contact: Yekatit Bezooayehu at ybezoayehu@howardcountymd.gov</p> <p>Registration for Full LHIC meetings: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1428672962289?aff=oddtcreator</p> <p>Howard County Report Card 2025</p> <p>2024 HCHAS Summary</p> <p>HCHD WhatsApp Channel</p> <p>Elkridge WhatsApp Channel</p> <p>Columbia WhatsApp Channel</p> <p>https://www.hclhic.org/membership/newsletter-</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Banners <p>Columbia photovoice – Long Reach on Thursday, January 22, 2026, 6:00-7:30 pm.</p> <p>Need to report non-emergency issues? Download the TellHoCo App.</p> <p>Trinity Maternal and Infant Supply Drive – January 17, 2026, 3-4pm at the Howard County Elkridge Branch Library.</p> <p>Howard County Child Care Fair - January 24, 2026, 10 am-1 pm at the East Columbia 50+ Center.</p> <p>HPCSS Road to Kindergarten – Informational Session, various times and locations.</p> <p>Howard County Perinatal Equity and Care for Everyone (P.E.A.C.E.) Project sponsored – Doulas and Dads: A Breastfeeding Workshop, February 7, 2026, at 10 am.</p> <p>Celebrating 2026 Black Maternal Health Week – Save the Date (discussions, resources and community support): April 18, 2026, at 11 am-2 pm, Harriet Tubman Cultural Center.</p> <p>Johns Hopkins Medicine – Stroke Survivor Support Group 2nd Thursday of every month, 5-6 pm</p> <p>Howard County Library Seed Drive, January 24, 2026, 1:00-4:00 pm, Miller Library.</p>	<p>tools</p> <p>Columbia Photovoice: bit.ly/CHWColumbia</p> <p>Tell Hoco: howardcountymd.gov/tell-hoco</p> <p>Maternal and Infant Supply Drive: https://www.trinitymaternalwellness.org/</p> <p>Child Care Fair: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/howard-county-child-care-fair-2025-tickets-1037059040507?aff=oddtcreator</p> <p>HCPSS Road to Kindergarten: https://www.hcpss.org/enroll/kindergarten/</p> <p>Doulas and Dads: https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/howardcounty/activity/search/detail/156297?onlineSiteId=0&from_original_cui=true</p> <p>Registration will open soon and more info will be sent by email.</p> <p>Stroke Survivor Support Group: https://stroke-survivors-support-group-0mlc9.events.hcgh.hopkinsmedicine.org/</p> <p>Howard County Seed Drive: https://howardcounty.librarycalendar.com/event/howard-county-seed-drive-313928</p>
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	<p>Living Well Chronic Disease Self-Management program.</p> <p>National Girls and Women in Sports Day, February 1, 2026, 10 am – 2 pm, North Laurel Community Center.</p> <p>Community Café at Owen Brown, January 22, 2026, from 5:00-7:30 pm East Columbia 50+ Center.</p> <p>Tobacco & Cannabis Announcements: HCHD Tobacco and Cannabis website created.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, Printable resources and videos for parents and youth • Requests for Tobacco & Cannabis Prevention presentations and materials <p>NAMI Family Caregiver HelpLine 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)</p> <p>NAMI Howard County MD, “The Rhythms of Wellbeing: How Sleep, Mood and Seasons Intertwine.” Virtual – January 27, 2026, from 7 pm-8:30 pm</p> <p>Safeguard Your Home brochure (Support and Resources).</p> <p>Howard County LHIC 2026 Calendar:</p>	<p>Living Well Chronic Disease Self-Management Info</p> <p>National Girls and Women in Sports Day: https://www.hcrpsports.org/ngwsd</p> <p>Community Café at Owen Brown: https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904094BAFAE2DA5FB6-59888364-owen</p> <p>Tobacco & Cannabis website: https://www.howardcountymd.gov/health/tobacco-cannabis</p> <p>Request Form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeKLx2fIC7IRkgIjzzUMcFeDHDHITs4x1Ca5Ii2l8x6MksLYQ/viewform</p> <p>NAMI Family Caregiver HelpLine: https://bit.ly/3Zdw2ws</p> <p>“The Rhythms of Wellbeing: How Sleep, Mood and Seasons Intertwine:” https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6g6BZ5Tb6Z48_00KbKJg?mc_cid=1d8a5749b9&mc_eid=dc54dfc3d0#/registration</p> <p>Safeguard Your Home brochure: https://www.hclhic.org/healthy/suicide-prevention</p> <p>LHIC Calendar: https://www.hclhic.org/home/calendar?id=2025&submit=+Go+To+Ca</p>
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	Ms. Rivera-Brute noted that the next 2026 quarterly Full LHIC Hybrid Meeting will be held on April 16, 2026, from 9-11 am.	lendar 2026 LHIC Meetings registration: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-hclhic-full-coalition-meetings-tickets-1428672962289?aff=oddtcreator
Next Steps & Wrap-up	Presentation will be posted on HCLHIC webpage. HCLHIC post- meeting survey – responses are needed!	LHIC website https://www.hclhic.org/ Post-meeting survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/83FVZRD

Respectfully submitted by LaTonya Love,
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Bureau of Assessment, Planning & Community Engagement,
Howard County Health Department