



### **Voter Engagement Member Spotlight: HDC MidAtlantic**

In 2022 HDC named voter registration education as an important strategy for strengthening residents' experiences and quality of life. HDC understands that resident participation in civic engagement is a key step in advocating for their own interests and needs. As an organization, we knew where we wanted to go, and we needed to build a roadmap to get there. Throughout this process, we defined goals, activities, timelines, and assigned leaders and support staff. We fostered connections with our colleagues, partners, and residents, and celebrated milestones. HDC collectively learned, adapted, collaborated, and became leaders in voter registration efforts.

**The goal of HDC's Voter Registration Education Initiative is to promote and support residents' full and equal access to opportunities to participate in the voting process.** As an organization, we asked ourselves three questions: How does HDC ensure that residents have ongoing access to the voting process? How does HDC ensure that staff understands and connects to the value of engaging residents in voting? Finally, how does HDC mobilize residents and staff in the voting process?

We started this journey by surveying our property management and resident services teams. HDC staff expressed a need to build their skills and capacity around voter registration. We researched nonpartisan organizations that aligned with HDC's mission and values. We connected with the YWCA of Lancaster PA Center for Racial and Gender Equity to provide staff with Voter Equity training along with an intensive Voter Registration Logistics Training for the Resident Services staff. Lead staff participated in The National Low-Income Housing Coalition Our Home, Our Votes webinar series to learn strategies for registering, educating, and mobilizing residents to be civically engaged. There we learned best practices and strategies from peer organizations, the connection of low-income renters to underrepresented voter turnout, and the importance of engaging residents in the voting process. These opportunities to engage in continuous learning lit a spark to roll out this new initiative and dive into creative ideas.

We continued building relationships and partnerships by entering a collective cohort through Pennsylvania Housing Alliance and Nonprofit Votes. Entering this partnership provided HDC with opportunities to connect with statewide organizations, and we were given effective tools to host voter registration drives in three of our densest counties.

One effective strategy was to build partnerships with nonpartisan organizations that could provide residents with voter registration services. Organizations like the League of Women

Voters and Lancaster Votes played an instrumental role in providing residents with access to nonpartisan voter information. We started by hosting seven voter registration drives at seven properties in Berks County, PA. Resident Leaders, Property Managers, and Resident Services Coordinators worked with the volunteers from the League of Women Voters Berks Chapter to host the drives where residents were offered unbiased assistance to register, update addresses, learn who is on the ballot, learn where to vote, and sign up for reminders. In Berks County, we celebrated with over 40 residents who were connected to the voting process because of hosting voter registration drives.

In Lancaster County, we are partnering with Lancaster Votes and the League of Women Voters Lancaster Chapter to host 21 voter registration drives at 18 properties before December 2022. Our goal is to connect 150 residents to the voting process.



Another effective strategy was ensuring that residents receive voter registration information at various points of contact with the Property Management staff and the Resident Services Coordinators. The voter registration forms and a QR flyer linking to [vote.org](https://www.vote.org) in English and Spanish are included in the move-in packet and annual recertification packet. Resident Services Coordinators offer residents information and forms about voter registration during individual appointments as well. In addition, voter registration forms and QR flyers are posted in common spaces and offices.

Along with implementing these key strategies, Property Management and Resident Services collaborated to provide regional training to all Community Managers and Resident Services Coordinators. We underlined the importance of the Voter Registration Education Initiative and its connection to HDC's mission. Staff received technical training explaining the process, expectations, and dos and don'ts of 501c3 nonprofits. We offered a safe space for staff to ask questions, share concerns, and discuss how they plan to engage residents.

As we approach the end of the first year, we are preparing to evaluate and adapt to ensure that HDC will continue creating opportunities to promote and support residents' full and equal access to participate in the voting process. The Voter Registration Education Initiative will continue to grow and reach more residents and increase voter turnout. Offering residents opportunities to civically engage is a small step toward affirming equity, agency, and mutuality. This small step communicates to residents that we see them, we advocate with them, and we are committed to breaking down barriers while creating access.

**HDC's mission is to build hope and opportunity for all residents to reach their full potential by creating, preserving, and strengthening affordable housing communities.**