

# DEMOCRACY HUBS

# 2021 IMPACT REPORT



# The Urgent Need for Statewide Civic Engagement

Gentrification has changed the demographics of historically redlined communities and eroded the voting blocs in these communities. As a result, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents have increasingly moved from Boston to Gateway Cities. After residents are displaced, they lose community ties as well as public and nonprofit services. Displacement causes vacuums of trusted leadership, resulting in large gaps in representation and political power at the city and state levels for BIPOC residents of the Gateway Cities.

To address these gaps in representation and power, the Massachusetts Voter Table, MassVOTE, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, and Asian Pacific Islanders Civic Action Network created Democracy HUBS, a new statewide infrastructure for civic engagement, in 2020. These four statewide coordinating organizations decided to focus on six regions to rebuild the political power of BIPOC residents, while strengthening infrastructure in Boston. Each region has an anchor organization that coordinates voter engagement programs among local partners, supporting organizations that focus on specific geographic areas and/or constituencies, and emerging organizations that have trusted leaders but limited civic engagement capacity. In our first year, the Democracy HUBS hosted six regional Democracy Schools, carried out 79,530 one-on-one conversations with voters, and regranted \$439,300 to 35 organizations. Of the 54,000 unique voters who our trusted leaders talked to, 56 percent cast a ballot in 2020, compared with 49 percent of our control group of unlikely voters.

In 2021, the second year of the Democracy HUBS, we sought to convert as many of the presidential level voters to municipal voters and strengthen the network of civic engagement organizations at the regional and state levels. In the 2020 presidential election, 76 percent of registered voters cast a ballot because BIPOC, low-income, and young voters cast ballots at much higher rates. However, the electorate in municipal elections skews whiter, higher income, and older. The goal of the Democracy HUBS in 2021 was to increase voter turnout by raising the stakes of local elections to presidential election voters.

# 2021 Accomplishments

In our second year of the Democracy HUBS, we strengthened the civic engagement infrastructure. We drew our lessons from the first year of the Democracy HUBS to create systems for earlier regranting, stronger accountability, and smoother workflows for training and on-boarding in 2021. The anchor organizations built community with each other through monthly convenings, and in-person outdoor coordinated regional canvasses fostered camaraderie between leaders from different organizations. Six out of eight emerging organizations in 2020 continued civic engagement efforts in 2021, and four out of these six emerging organizations contacted more voters in 2021 than in 2020, although the electorate was less energized in 2021 than 2020.

Massachusetts voters made great strides toward equitable representation in city halls in 2021. Michelle Wu is the first person of color and first woman elected as mayor of Boston. Thu Nguyen is the first Southeast Asian elected to Worcester City Council and the first non-binary elected official in Massachusetts. After a lawsuit ended the discriminatory at-large voting system in Lowell, Corey Robinson was elected the first Black city councilor, and an unprecedented three Cambodian Americans will serve on the city council, two from new district seats. Majority Latinx Holyoke elected Joshua Garcia, the first Latino to serve as mayor.

Boston voters resoundingly supported two ballot initiatives that advance residents' voices in decisions that impact everyday life. 79% of voters supported a nonbinding ballot initiative to restore an elected school committee, a clear mandate that will provide the momentum to gain permission from the state. Voters approved a binding ballot measure that democratizes how the city spends its \$4 billion budget.

Yet, only 1 in 3 voters in Boston cast a ballot, even in an historic election. Fewer than 1 in 5 voters in Lowell and Brockton cast a ballot, and 1 in 6 voters cast a ballot in Worcester. Only 1 in 10 voters in New Bedford and Springfield cast a ballot. Although these turnout figures are disappointing, this is an improvement from previous years, when voter turnout hovered in the single digits in some Gateway Cities.

# By the Numbers ...

73,289 conversations with voters

109,252 door knocks

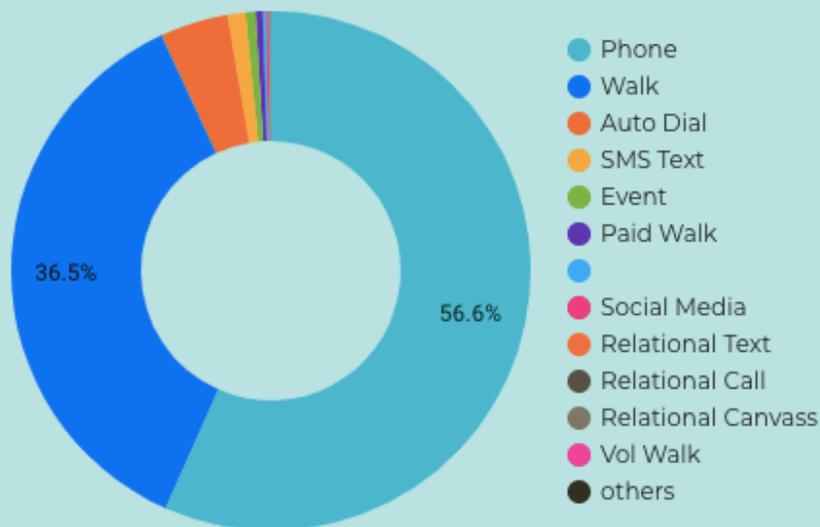
1,037,815 phone calls

Completed 342 data requests for 38 organizations

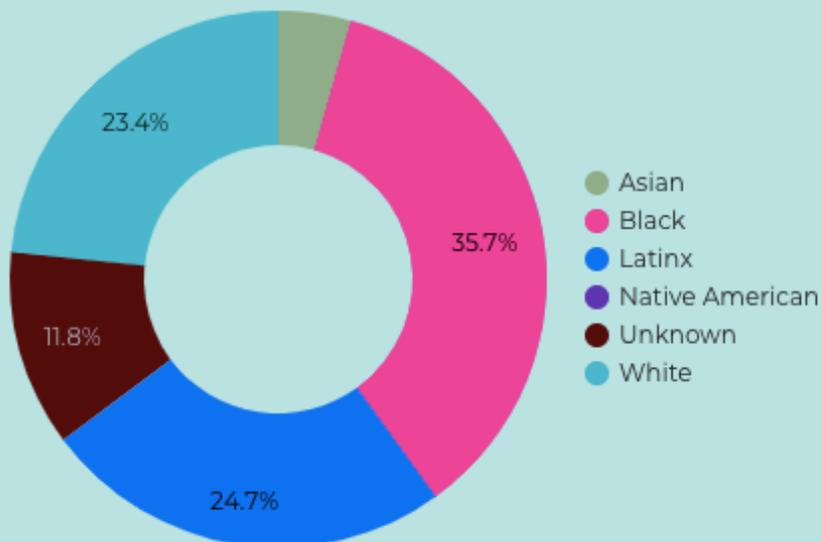
\$433,000 regranted to 34 organizations

Trained 76 people on how to host a phone bank, 49 people on how to run a canvass, and 88 on State & Local Democracy

### Contacts by Type



### Contacts by Race



# MVPs of Civic Engagement

The Massachusetts Voter Table asked the Democracy HUBS partner organizations about their Most Valuable Players of civic engagement in 2021. We received 41 heart-felt submissions that showed genuine admiration and gratitude for the work of trusted leaders, who ensured that their neighbors cast ballots in the historic municipal elections.



## **Brandon Delgado** **Coalition for Social Justice**

"Brandon took ownership of our New Bedford and Taunton outreach. Brandon alone had 1,124 conversations between phone calls and canvassing."



## **Carmen Feliciano** **New England United 4 Justice**

"She came in as a new civic team member and has mastered our phone banking program as the top organizer in our phone bank program. She led her community in food justice and food access throughout this year, while balancing civic engagement and voter empowerment in the neighborhoods."

# MVPs of Civic Engagement

## Eny Lovo

### Neighbors United for a Better East Boston



"Enilda has a huge heart and took a huge leap this year stepping into NUBE lead coordinator role taking NUBE's mission, theory and leadership development programming to its next stage. She approached redistricting, ballot questions, and special election voter mobilization with such dedication, joy and passion that she gives to all that is important to her. She never forgets that the voices of the community need to be at the forefront in our work, particularly those that are often left behind and often are not eligible to vote. I know that our community is forever grateful for her courage, love for social justice and all the admirable qualities that makes her "nuestra Eny"."

## Luciano Paskevicius

### Latinx Community Center for Empowerment



"Great efforts with the Lowell Votes Coalition to support capacity building for Spanish education and voter engagement across the City. It was his first time phone banking with Lowell Votes/LCCE and Luciano made over 1,000 calls!"

# MVPs of Civic Engagement



## Mary Tauras Lowell Votes

"Mary coordinates LowellVotes and writes grants--all on a part-time schedule. Her quiet strength and deep love for Lowell has inspired many volunteers and organizations to step up their voter engagement, which will have a long term impact on the daily lives of Lowellians."



## Corissa Schular Pioneer Valley Project

"She canvassed the most people individually!! AMAZING."

## Beth Posner-Waldron

### Worcester Interfaith

Beth went door knocking in the rain and recruited members from her church, Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester, to volunteer in voter engagement efforts. She strengthened their team and deepened relationships for the long haul of electoral justice.



# What's Next?

Our communities have the potential to change the dynamics on Beacon Hill for a generation. In 2022, BIPOC communities, young people, and immigrants can shape a wide-open gubernatorial election, cement the progress of reform-driven district attorneys, win sustainable revenue to fund public schools and transportation, and elect legislators who reflect their communities. In our third year, the Democracy HUBS aim to build on our successes in 2021 by developing leaders who can increase trust and participation in their communities in the 2022 elections, hold more diverse city councils accountable to community demands, and ensure that the ballot initiative victories in Boston turn into long-term input on the city budget and an elected school committee.

The Democracy HUBS plan to raise the ceiling of political possibility in 2022 and beyond involves: turning out a bloc of 500,000 BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income voters; training 100 community organizations in Massachusetts; developing grassroots leaders ready to co-govern with their communities; and winning structural reforms for racial equity. Together, this multiracial electorate can deliver consequential electoral victories and defeat the stranglehold of complacency on Beacon Hill in 2022. This is necessary to recover from the pandemic, deepen democracy, and create the economic security that allows people to thrive.

# Democracy HUBS Partner Organizations

## Statewide Coordinators

Massachusetts Voter Table  
MassVOTE  
Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee  
Advocacy Coalition  
Asian Pacific Islanders' Civic Action  
Network

## Anchor Organizations

Coalition for Social Justice  
La Colaborativa  
Lowell Votes  
Neighbor to Neighbor  
New England United for Justice  
Worcester Interfaith

## Supporting & Emerging Organizations

Asian American Resource Workshop  
Asian Community Development  
Corporation  
Black Economic Justice Institute, Inc.  
Brockton Interfaith Community  
Cambodian Mutual Assistance  
Association  
Cape Verdean Association  
Chinese Culture Connection, Inc.  
Chinese Progressive Association  
Coalition for a Better Acre  
Coalition for Social Justice  
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative  
Families for Justice as Healing  
I Have A Future  
La Colaborativa  
La Comunidad, Inc.  
Latino Education Institute  
Latinx Center for Community  
Empowerment  
Lowell Alliance  
Madison Park Development  
Corporation

Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants  
Mass Jobs with Justice  
Massachusetts Affordable Housing  
Alliance  
MASSPIRG Education Fund  
Neighbors United for a Better East  
Boston  
Pioneer Valley Project  
Prophetic Resistance Boston  
Quincy Asian Resources  
Reclaim Roxbury  
Revere Youth In Action  
Southeast Asian Coalition of  
Central Massachusetts, Inc.  
True Alliance Center  
United Interfaith Action of  
Southeastern MA  
Vietnamese American Initiative for  
Development, Inc.  
Worcester Voter Registration  
Initiative  
YWCA Southeastern  
Massachusetts

