

**Howard County Racial Equity Task Force
Personal & Public Safety Meeting Minutes
Chair: Allison Sayers
March 11, 2021**

Panelists Present – Allison Sayers, Richard Gibson, Jonathan Branch, Marcus Harris, Jumel Howard, Eduardo Ribiero, Zikora Akanegbu, Maya Carey, Gus Bibum, Karla Morrison-Brooks (Facilitator), Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2).

Not Present: Rahel Petros, Zainab Chaudry

Opening:

Allison Sayers completed attendance and introduced the meeting.

Discussion Points:

Allison started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 11th
 - Second by Eduardo
 - Approved by everyone

Allison began discussing about the Open Meeting on March 4th

- During the meeting a community member made hateful and racist remarks
 - The Task Force views those statements as unacceptable and as an inadequate reflection of the Task Force values.
 - We stand together, especially with the Asian and Latinx community, to denounce and condemn this hateful rhetoric.

Allison facilitated the check-in question: What do you hope to do with the extra daylight time?

- Zikora- Hope to go outside more (walk more)
- Eduardo- Agrees with Zikora
- Jonathan- Also would like to walk more
- Karla- Excited about longer walks in the evening
- Rich- Outside volleyball
- Jumel- Also looking forward to walks and reading
- Marcus- Spend more time on his deck
- Allison- Wants her kid outside and glad to be outside with her

Karla went over the agenda

- Guest presentation
- Updates from research
- Recommendation development process
- Debrief the Public Hearing
- Check out

Karla introduced the first speaker, Dana Vickers Shelley

- Dana is the Executive Director of the Maryland ACLU
- She is here to talk about hate crimes in Howard County any other information

Dana began her presentation

- States that her invitation to speak was to talk about their policing work in the legislature and race equity issues
 - However, she is pleased to talk about hate crimes as well
- Although many people think Maryland is immune to the worst things that people see in different parts of the country, in terms of how individuals are treated, many people still are concerned about their safety, or signage of flags. It is not a physical assault, but it incites a feeling of not belonging.
- Hate crimes are reported in the State, but microaggressions also occur all throughout the States and many other places
- Talked about the Maryland Coalition for justice and police accountability
 - Launched Summer 2020
 - 90 organizations across the state of Maryland have joined
 - Some national organizations have joined as well
 - They want to ensure that voices and expertise of individuals who have been impacted by the failings of this system are at the center of what the solutions should be.
 - Working on 5 demands this session
 - Aggressive in appealing the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights
 - Police officers should not be given special/different treatment in regards to discipline
 - Bringing control of Baltimore City policing to the residents of Baltimore City
 - Calling for counselors, not cops
 - Removing SROs
 - Inform and improve the Public Information Act
 - So, people can have access to information about the discipline that's been conducted or met by police officers
 - ACLU's focus is to dismantle white supremacy
 - Meeting with elected officials and coalition members
 - Listening to people's personal experience of those killed or harmed by police officers
 - Many counties, including Howard County, have been actively involved in supporting and working with other colleagues across the State.
- Questions:
 - Eduardo- A part of Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice, which is supported by ACLU. He wonders if Dana worked with immigrants here, in Howard County, and across the State.
 - Dana- Immigrant rights is one of their priorities at ACLU of Maryland. They have been working both in Howard County and Fredrick County on immigrant rights, in terms of keeping families together. They wanted to make sure that those most vulnerable were able to come out of prison and come safely home. This legislative session, they are focusing on the Trust Act to further ensure that there are opportunities for immigrant families. Determined to get rid of 287 G Policy because it is detrimental to community and does not it provide safety. Beginning work with immigrant families on the Eastern Shore

- Allison- Are there specific issues or concerns in Howard County?
 - Dana- Civil liberties and civil rights have to be protected everyone. You cannot presume that economics, demographics, and history that something is as it should be. Grateful for Howard County passing the Liberty Act (CB-63-2020), local version of the Trust Act. Hope to use the success of this local bill as leverage for the State.
- Zikora- In 2020, there was a 150% increase of Anti-Asian hate crimes (Howard County had hate crimes too), do you have any input on if that's something happening in Maryland?
 - Dana- Sadly, we see that happening here. They do not currently have clients who raised concerns, but in last 4 years they have. They had a case in Bethesda, MD regarding discrimination of a woman who wore a hijab to a coffee shop. Sometimes, things haven't been as stark as a hate crime, but telling someone how to dress, telling Black women how to wear their hair, etc.(Crown Act was passed last year). Also, counseled students from MICA Art School regarding protection of transgender students.
- Zikora- How has the progress been with trying to get more counselors in schools? This is something this task force is looking into to implement in Howard County
 - Dana- They believe that if they can get SROs out of school, they can use that money for supporting counselors, art teachers, music teachers, psychologists, and social workers. Reopened a landmark lawsuit that the ACLU previously filed, Bradford vs. Maryland Board of Education. They are advocates for education equity and that children have the necessary resources to succeed.
- Eduardo-Does the situations involving the workforce involve public employees, specifically in Howard County? Are there any disparities that you noticed? He also shares personal testament to discrimination in the workplace
 - Dana- They do not currently have any cases. Suggest looking into what is actually on the test and ask if everyone is required to take it in the organization. Ask HR, specifically County Government. Check County EOC Office (referring to Eduardo's personal situation).
 - Karla- Suggested that Eduardo email or testifies his experience so the appropriate group can consider it in their recommendations
 - Dana- Adds that the ACLU is looking into old hiring practices and improving them

Karla shifted gears to updates on research and opens the floor for Allison

- Allison began her presentation on the Howard County Detention Center
 - Howard County Detention Center is the only jail in Howard County
 - Criteria for the Detention Center:
 - On pretrial, meaning they are awaiting trial. They have been charged but have not received a sentence
 - Have a sentence of 18 months or less
 - Anything more than this sentencing, they would end up at DOC
 - It is possible to have multiple 18 month sentences
 - Data:
 - In 2019, the Detention Center was nearly split 50/50 Black and White
 - County is 20% Black and 55% White

- There is a disproportionate number of Black people in the Detention Center
- The Detention Center has a re-entry plan
 - When a person is released from the detention center, either waiting for trial or after completing their sentence, they are placed back into the community
 - They want to give them skills so that these people can succeed in the community and that they don't have to go back into the Detention Center
 - Two major issues:
 - Substance abuse
 - Treatment regarding substance abuse
 - Housing
 - What the Detention Center currently has to help combat the substance abuse issue:
 - Health Department has the Bureau of Addictions Program
 - Health Department employees are in the jail offering treatment inside of the jail
 - Peers in jail for drug treatment
 - These people are employees, and they, themselves, are recovering
 - They have proper certification
 - Peers of the people in the Detention Center
 - Part of the Detention Centers re-entry team
 - They help link people to addiction services
 - First ones to see the people in the Detention Center
 - What we need:
 - Detox facility
 - If this is needed, they would have to be shipped out of County to get the proper services
 - Crisis Center
 - Other counties have these facilities
 - More inpatient treatment facilities that include women
 - We only have one, Howard House
 - In order to go to the Howard House, you have to be not actively using drugs (essentially already detoxed)
 - This place is only for men
 - Women do not have an inpatient place in Howard County
 - As a result, we are having to send community members out of the County to receive services/help
 - Meaning that we are placing them somewhere else that is not near their family, potentially not near their job, and it is sending people away
 - What the Detention Center currently has to help combat the housing issue:
 - Partnership with the non-profit called Bridges
 - Guilford House
 - Very small- houses up to 5 men
 - Has a part-time peer specialist

- Has a house manager who lives on site and who is on recovery himself
 - Do not charge rent
 - Many sober living places do charge rent
 - Have a Mandatory Savings Program
 - If you are going to live there, you have to get a job within 30 days
 - Staff at the Detention Center will help people get jobs
 - Job has to be of livable wage, a job where they can grow and move out of the Guilford House
 - Stay up to 6 months
 - If they have a mental health diagnosis, they are required to engage in services
 - Not a shelter
 - This transitional living
 - Cannot be using any type of substance
- Grassroots
 - Problem: they get filled very quickly
- What we need:
 - Stable housing
 - A lot of people are not necessarily meeting the definition of homelessness as defined by HUD
 - Definition: Having no roof over your head
 - There are a lot of people who do not have a fixed address and move from place to place, which is not really being considered homeless by the federal definition.
 - More emergency shelter
 - Other than Grassroots, there is no other place to send people, unless we send them out of the County
 - More family shelters
 - Currently have limited family shelters in this County
- Overall, we have a need, but we aren't fulfilling it in the County, and we are sending people to other counties to do it.
- Another concern for individuals who are re-entering the community is identity documentation
 - Social security cards
 - People sometimes do not have IDs
 - Public assistance
 - Food stamps, etc.
- The Detention Center does help people get those identity documents, but it can be difficult
- Also, people have fines that they cannot pay, which can inhibit people from getting their driver's license

- Without a driver's license and good transportation, people have to go out of the County for better services.
- Allison's theory as to why Howard County is not meeting the needs listed above:
 - Not acknowledging that there is a problem
 - Denying that there is a problem
 - Other counties are housing our community members
- Want to give proper services to those who have been charged or after their sentence, so they can properly re-enter that community again and succeed.
 - Rich- He testified HB-1233, which is designed to address this re-entry issue at the State level. This bill dealt with family reconnection, plan for getting them licenses, ensuring that they had the ability to properly apply to jobs, and other things of that nature. He supports what Allison said as far as it might be an issue that they can focus on addressing in their subgroup. He supports the group suggesting that the County implement more re-entry based and substance abuse based supports.
- Questions:
 - Karla- How many people does the Detention Center hold or how many are in it?
 - Allison- Currently does not have an exact number, but the annual report is accessible online on howardcountymd.gov
 - On the website, there is an annual report for 2019
 - 2019 us the mist recent data, but Allison does not think it fluctuates that much.

Karla introduces Jonathan and Jumel as the next speakers

- Jonathan begins their presentation on human trafficking
 - General background information:
 - Defines human trafficking as the trade of humans for the purposes of forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation, or prostitution for the traffickers or others.
 - Trafficking involves transporting someone into a situation of exploitation
 - Includes forced labor, marriage, prostitution, and organ removal
 - Human trafficking is also known as modern slavery and trafficking of persons
 - These are accepted by the US Department of State
 - Human trafficking is a crime
 - Human trafficking does not necessarily involve moving a person from one place to another, but it can
 - Statistics:
 - Assessing the full scope of human trafficking is difficult because many cases go undetected
 - United Nations refers to human trafficking as the "hidden figure crime"
 - Internationally only about .04% survivors of human trafficking cases are identified, meaning a vast majority go undetected
 - Human trafficking earns global profits of 150 billion dollars a year for traffickers
 - 99 billion of which comes from commercial sexual exploitation
 - Globally, it estimated that 71 % of enslaved people are women and girls and 29% are men and boys
 - Emerging crime in Maryland, and in many ways, Howard County

- Howard County is uniquely situated to be a hotspot for human trafficking
- Traffickers utilize the major roads which pass through our areas and communities
 - For example, Interstate 95, which conveniently connects Howard County to major cities across the East Coast
- Data:
 - Almost every month for the past 5 years, there have been arrests involving human trafficking related instances in Howard County
 - Between 2014 and 2019, the Howard County Police Department handled 93 cases of human trafficking, with 29 arrests, and 58 identified victims
 - Between 2019 and 2020, there have been about 14 cases of human trafficking prosecuted
 - In 2020, there were 11 cases of human trafficking investigated and 7 arrests were made
 - Could not get these numbers disaggregated by race as of yet
- Resources related to human trafficking in Howard County
 - Office of Human Trafficking Prevention (at the County Government level)
 - States Attorney Office of Human Trafficking Unit
 - Established in 2012 and works in conjunction with the Howard County Police Department
 - The Office Victim Witness Assistance Unit
 - Works on getting all victims involved in human trafficking in treatment and rehabilitation services
 - Works to change the culture and stigma around prostitution victims
 - Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council
 - Established in 2019
 - Advises the County Government on human trafficking prevention in Howard County
 - Conducts outreach and education on prevention to spread awareness of the warning signs of human trafficking
 - HopeWorks
 - Sole provider of gender-based violence in Howard County
 - Serves both men and women
 - Offer intervention, outreach, and training for the community
 - Offer emergency shelter, case management, and safety planning
 - At the time of his conversation, there were working with 5 victims of human trafficking
 - Seems to especially impact people of color, (more) particularly women of color
 - There is disparity noted in the treatment of these victims, especially if they are suspected to be engaged in prostitution
 - Howard County has been awarded 1 million dollars over the next three years
 - Could not get this figure straight. One article said 3 million and another said 1 million
 - Money is from US Department of Justice
 - Used to prevent human trafficking and to expand support for survivors

- Howard County Police Department in partnership with HopeWorks and Howard County did receive those grants
 - Money is designed to help state and local jurisdictions nationwide enhance law enforcement capacity and strengthen resources for families and individuals negatively affected by human trafficking
- Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force
 - Can be found at mdhumantrafficking.org
- Dosomething.org
 - Talks almost exclusively about human trafficking
- National human trafficking hotline, where you can call and get information about human trafficking or report it
 - Number is 1-888-373-7888
 - Or text to 233733
- Overall, according to their research, human trafficking is a problem in Maryland and in Howard County
- Suspected cases should be reported immediately
- Jonathan's conclusion:
 - Traffickers should be arrested as soon as possible and victims should be respected and rehabilitated
- Jumel added that the County is taking many steps to address this issue right now. After the conversation with HopeWorks, it has been determined that they should wait and see what they and the County have going on and how they are able to utilize the grant funds before the Task Force tries to make recommendations on something when they only have a short period of time.
- Questions:
 - Zikora- Does age play a factor in human trafficking in Howard County?
 - Rich- Human trafficking is hard to investigate and prosecute because it doesn't have a typical "look." It is not directly obvious. As far as age, it could old or young people. They are just starting to scrape the surface of labor trafficking. Thinks that labor trafficking might be something going on in Howard County more than we know. He is on the Human Trafficking Task Force for the State, and there is no generic look, age, or gender. It comes in various forms.
 - Karla mentions labor crime as possibly a new area of research
 - Rich- Labor trafficking was not a State crime until fairly recently. Howard County is a wealthy community, and there is a fair number of immigrants that are in our population. Those two variables tend to have a correlation in labor trafficking. We have not figured out how to effectively root it out, but they are working on it actively.
 - Jumel- Their recommendations have to be sustainable. We have to be able to come back to these conversations in a way that's easier than it was for them to get here. Do not wait for legislation to get passed through. Think about as more is discovered as this form of human trafficking is emerging in Howard County, can we quickly come back together and help make recommendations that address them.
 - Jonathan agrees that this is a good idea
 - Karla also agrees

Karla introduced Eduardo as the next speaker

- Eduardo began his presentation with a little background
 - He is an immigrant
 - Born and raised in Brazil
 - Immigrated to America about 20 years ago
 - Lives in Savage/Laurel, MD
 - Works as an medical interpreter
 - Has seen firsthand the impacts of immigration policies, crackdowns on immigrant families, etc
- Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Rights and Justice
 - Been a member since 2019
 - They focus on legislation, specifically the governmental agreement between ICE and Howard County and the Jessup Detention Center
 - CB-51 was in favor of removing ICE and had won 3 to 2 vote, but was vetoed by County Executive, Calvin Ball
 - Many argued that it was a better way to stay close to family; it was not
 - People were moved to other parts of the country during the pandemic, which is a major health risk
 - Some argued that Howard County had better conditions
 - **Refer to presentation**
 - Eduardo shared the Coalition goals
 - Showed the Coalition members
 - Many human right organizations have joined
 - Talked about the ICE contract with Howard County
 - The Coalition strongly opposes it and continues to fight for the end of this contract
 - Shared comments from County Executive, Calvin Ball regarding the contract
 - Shared small victories on the legislative front against the ICE contract
 - CB-51 was introduced by Councilwoman Liz Walsh, which would have ended the contract with ICE in Howard County
 - Did not pass at this time
 - **Refer to presentation for specifics on how Councilmembers voted and comments given**
 - County Executive, Calvin Ball released a policy clarification regarding the contract with ICE, detailing that they would only be accepting ICE detainees convicted of violent crimes
 - Before policy was in place, the Coalition had detected that many inmates were unjustly detained
 - Liberty Act CB-63-2020 introduced by Councilman Dr. Opel Jones, a Trust Act that prohibits Howard County agencies from cooperating with ICE
 - 4 to 1 vote
 - Swiftly signed into law by County Executive, Calvin Ball
 - Shared some major developments that were found after CB-51 was kept
 - **Refer to presentation for specific evidence and stories**
 - Showed specific documents of said grievances

- What to do moving forward
 - Avoid complacency
 - Keep elected officials accountable
 - Demand consistency and commitment, rather than empty gestures
 - Continue raising awareness
 - Continue empowering immigrant voices
- Questions:
 - Allison- Do you know where the money goes once we get the money from having the ICE detainees? Do you know whether the federal government has mandates on how we can use the money?
 - Eduardo- He will investigate those questions and come back with an answer.
 - Allison- Currently, we are supposed to have ICE detainees at the jail who have been convicted of violent crimes, not charged? Violent crimes are codified in Maryland statutes, is that the same language the Detention Center is using?
 - Eduardo-Yes. (Regarding the second question) The description that he has seen is that they qualify that kind of crime as rape, murder, and aggravated assault.
 - Allison- There are other crimes that are included. Do you know if there is any type of time limit?
 - Eduardo- From the testimonies that he has heard, many have said that they are people who have already served their time, but they are still being detained because ICE has different guidelines and values. He would like to see the new data.

Karla moved on to next agenda item, recommendation planning process

- Other groups are created small working groups within the subgroup to dive further into 1 area
- Make sure these small groups are avoiding quorum
 - Only 3 to 4 members in each small group
- Small groups would:
 - Discuss data
 - Draft recommendations
 - Bring recommendations forward to the rest of the group at the April or May meeting for discussion and consideration
- Goal is to have a vote on which recommendations would move forward in ideally May (or maybe June)
- Start drafting the report for Council
- Small groups will be supplied a recommendation template
- Feedback: Do we have a clear idea of the possible topics that we want to put up for recommendation?
 - Jonathan asked if the group members deciding the topics or if they are given to them.
 - Karla- The subgroup members will decide the topic
 - Rich suggested that the group drills down on the topics and agree on what those are; then, afterwards, break out into small groups.
 - Karla- agrees

- Allison is interested in the policing aspect and wonders whether if they should wait until after the policing meeting before finalizing topics
 - Rich seconds Allison's suggestion of getting all the data first
 - Marcus agrees
 - Maya also agrees
- Eduardo asked how many groups they would have
 - Karla- There isn't a set number. It is up to the group to decide.
- Allison was thinking of a chronology process for organization
- Jumel suggests asking other subgroups what they are thinking of drafting legislation on so they can have a better idea of what to hone in on.
 - Rich agrees. He also points out that they should not waste their efforts and duplicate recommendations that other groups are doing
 - Karla- Has the data on what each group is doing. Right now, there is overlap was the issue of SROs, and they have given it to the Education subgroup. The Environmental subgroup is looking at policing at public spaces (i.e. playgrounds) and how that affects the ability of residents to enjoy public space. The Chairs will also be meeting together.
- Karla has proposed that following the police presentation, there will be an email sent with all the topics that have been covered and will ask that everyone reviews them and decide in April which topics they want.
 - Karla wants to make sure that the group is following the timeline and is ready to work on the report in June so it can be finalized by July/August
- Maya asked if the group had begun thinking about recommendations. They would want to get a general consensus. Wants the recommendations should be with a transformative justice model in mind
- Rich asked a clarifying question about the subgroup looking into police at playgrounds and other public spaces
 - Karla- Buffy will email her with more specifics and details, but they are looking at if the police presence is hindering the residents' ability to enjoy the environmental space and feel comfortable. They are considering looking into this.
- Karla clarifies that they can have as many recommendations as they want; however, there will be two or three that they want to push in their report. Echoes Maya's point and wants to ensure that this subgroup is making recommendations that create change and pushing those up in the report.

Karla discussed next steps

- They will make space at the next meeting for the subgroup to debrief and discuss the public hearing
- Police presentation will be March 15th 5:00pm-6:15pm
- Next meeting would be April 8th
 - Layout recommendation topics

Allison mentioned the May 13th and June 10th meeting

Allison adjourns the meeting