

A Letter From Rabbi Michael



In the midst of an ongoing billionaire hostile takeover of our government, I somehow find myself deeply hopeful. While I am clear-eyed about our reality and am appropriately fearful and anxious, I am also in love with a vision of what our society can be, and I am constantly inspired with every step we take together to build that world rooted in love and democracy. We can live in a Pennsylvania where everyone has healthcare, where our schools are funded, and where it doesn't cost an arm and a leg to buy a home for our families. Our hope is rooted in the dream that we will transform our politicians into public officials who work for us.

I find myself deeply hopeful because here in Pennsylvania, in one of the most corrupt political terrains in the country, where we are told progress is impossible, we are organizing on the ground for a government we deserve, we are on the offensive, and we are winning.

We are advancing forward constantly because MarchOnHarrisburg is an organized movement full of some of the most amazing people who I am beyond lucky to work with. Progress and wins happen because of dedicated leaders who show up day in and day out to grind away and inch us all forward together. This letter is a mosaic of the spectacular work of our leaders from across Pennsylvania. All of our leaders experienced firsts this year: First time marching, first time lobbying, first time public speaking, first time knocking on doors, first time going to jail, and more. I want you to hear from them in their own words about what this work means to them.

To the person reading this: Thank you. None of this work, none of these wins are possible without your continued support.

For Love and Democracy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Pollack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Rabbi Michael Pollack

Executive Director of MarchOnHarrisburg

MOHPA.ORG



A March of Firsts

This May, **we spent four days marching 63 miles from Reading to Harrisburg**, demanding that our lawmakers pass a common-sense Gift Ban that 47 other states have. We prevailed against scorching heat and sore bodies, committed to right this injustice and driven by the strong ties of this incredible community that we have built together. Our numbers swelled as we marched, with a mix of marchers who have never missed a single mile and those joining us for the first time. On Monday, May 4, **over 70 of us marched into the halls of power** singing 'Which Side Are You On' and came face to face with lawmakers and lobbyists. We unrolled a banner reading 'You Take Bribes and People Die,' and **9 of our democracy warriors were arrested** by Capitol police while forcing the encounter with the guardians of corruption. Among the 9 arrested were graduate students and retirees, union workers and clergy. Hear from two of our leaders who experienced their first march:

This was my first march and first non-violent direct action. During the March to Ban Bribes, I felt my body growing tired on numerous occasions during the journey from Reading to Harrisburg only to be uplifted by my fellow marchers, sharing beautiful stories about their lives and their aspirations for a better and just world. **Our weariness was just a small sacrifice for the greater goal of getting money out of politics.** As the politicians hid behind their office doors, as the "suits" stood aloof and smirked at us for interrupting their lobbying meetings, and the chants of echoed across the halls of the Capitol while folks I marched alongside were getting arrested by the police, I felt a deep sense of pride and achievement for this movement. As a witness to these events, I felt an even deeper understanding of the struggle required and an even greater appreciation to those willing to put their bodies on the line for democracy.

- Antony, Pittsburgh PA



Amber and Antony on the march!



Pittsburgh leaders learning to screenprint our march shirts!

I found MoH in January after watching neighbors lose their lives standing up for one another across the country; in April I marched for the first time, and was on the planning team. One moment was kind of emotional. On Sunday morning, a pastor offered a blessing and anointed me. She said something like, "giving you strength when others say you are foolish for thinking you can change anything" and a sense of calm washed over me - then **I ended the march volunteering to be arrested.** I was in a room full of warmth, purpose, and people united in saying: we are doing the damn thing. **None of that happens without people willing to give their time and resources** to organize meals and lodging, design flyers, attend lobbying meetings, and fund the bail money. **- Amber, Middletown PA**

Stopping Multinational Corporate Spending in Elections Passes the House; A Result of Cross-Campaign Pressure!

HB497 - a bill banning huge multinational, foreign-influenced corporations from political spending (secret spending, Super PAC, other independent expenditures) – passed out of the full House in June! This win is a direct result of the pressure we have built across our campaigns through over a decade of basebuilding, marching, lobbying, and nonviolent direct action.

Now, we are in the midst of lobbying the State Senate, and a full-fledged door knocking and direct action campaign in Western PA. Hear from two leaders on their firsts:



Olivia and other members advocating for the FIC Bill at the Capitol Building - 4 of the 6 pictured lobbied for the first time that day!

Before my first time lobbying, I knew that advocacy to lawmakers mattered in theory but I never saw myself doing it. Previously, my own blind partisanship led me to think that productive dialogue with those with opposing beliefs than me was impossible. As I lobbied for the first time with lawmakers across the political aisle, I realized how lobbying, at the end of the day, is primarily relationship building. I now know that sometimes the best thing to do is **lay the groundwork for future progress by meeting each other on a human level** and creating space for a respectful discussion.

- Olivia, Enola PA

I think stopping multinational corporations from spending creates tremendous positive effects for our communities, ensuring our elections are decided by Pennsylvanians. I immediately wanted to take action to help pass this bill and door knocking was something that allowed me to express my beliefs and help others recognize its importance. The door knocking experience was great, I had a lot of great conversations, I got to bond with great leaders and volunteers from MoH. **If we are to create positive change I believe it comes from the ground up**, which is why door knocking was so powerful for me.

- Chris, Wayne PA



We went to Indiana County for our first of many FIC Bill doorknocking weekends!

Movement for Ranked Choice Voting gains traction with Philadelphia City Council



Ethan speaks at a Philadelphia City Council meeting in favor of our RCV resolution!

Over the past year, through flyering and local organizing, we successfully brought the issue of ranked choice voting to the attention of Philadelphia City Council. While the legality of RCV in Pennsylvania is still in the hands of the PA General Assembly, our Ranked Choice Voting team worked with FairVote to draft a resolution recommending its adoption as soon as possible and calling on the state government to act on legalization. In May, we attended the meeting and **delivered testimony, outnumbering and out-arguing the detractors**, and the **resolution passed with only one dissenting vote**. I was struck by the number of community members who had never heard about us, but found that we were trying to take action on RCV and showed up to voice their support. When we talk to lawmakers, they often tend to downplay the impact of what we're fighting for and imply that we're wasting our time, but that experience showed me that many **people really do care about fixing how our democracy works and want to join us in this fight**.

- Ethan, Philadelphia PA

Developing Leaders

All our success as MarchOnHarrisburg is rooted in developing democracy leaders who are clear, confident, competent, committed, and connected. Once somebody joins, we invest a significant amount of time into their transformation. Hear from Andi, who is a legislative team leader, describe her experience in our leadership development program:

I joined MoH primarily because of its mentorship program. While I was drawn to the organization's mission to end state corruption, what truly set MoH apart was its **active investment in my leadership development and practical skill-building**. Among the many organizations I have been a part of, including workplaces and a PhD program, MoH is the only one that **consistently mentors, educates, and equips its members in political organizing**. I have been encouraged to work on projects I am new to and gain competency in skills I had no experience with; I couldn't be more pleased with the mentorship and support I've received from the MoH team.

- Andi, Conshohocken PA



In the weeks following our May 4th action, Andi became the leader of our legal support team! She quickly learned skills comparable to a paralegal, and did an incredible job supporting our lawyer and our members throughout the court process!

A Return to Old-School, Grassroots Organizing

We have a saying in MoH: Meet people where they are at. This year we returned to door knocking as a primary basebuilding tactic. Polling, common sense, and our experiences show us time and time again that people are upset and want money out of politics. We have gone back to basics in a major way, and are rediscovering the old truth that face-to-face conversations elevate our organizing. Through trainings around the state, we now have armies of volunteers knocking on doors - people who are deeply rooted in their community, people who care about our politics. Hear from some of our field leads themselves:

While doing this work, I've learned just how hard it is to engage people in a world where online isolation, fear, and apathy is the norm. So while the country I've been born into tries to curl up in the face of political intimidation, MoH has taught me that it is more important now than ever to build community. To resist.

Knocking doors showed me that there is a way to cut through the fear. Talking to each other, face-to-face, as neighbors. The conversations I had about corruption, politics, and people's porch decorations gives me hope that we can counteract a world of digital isolation and overcome political corruption – together.

- Patrick, Downingtown PA



MoH members and friends who knocked doors about the FIC Bill grabbed a delicious lunch together!

Door knocking was fun! The key takeaway is that people aren't informed on what data centers are and those who did **felt powerless without action**. So we **provided them action they can take!** We all did a great job tying in how it's a direct result of having money in politics.

- Whitney, Norristown PA



Patrick, Whitney, Zoe and other MoH leaders talked to their neighbors about proposed data centers in MontCo.

Door knocking in Montgomery County about data centers has been particularly special, as I've never door knocked before (let alone help organize an entire event). Quickly connecting the **construction of proposed data centers to the broader issue of money in politics** was a bit challenging, but we did it! Data centers are a hotspot of organizing right now, as it's an issue that instantly activates people. It's a **tangible form of the corruption we've been fighting for a decade**. We've been able to use our anti-bribery message to broaden folks' understanding of the political machine.

- Zoe, Haverford PA



Looking Forward

Big money interests are not letting up any time soon, and neither are we. So far this year, we have: marched 63 miles from Reading to Harrisburg, passed the FIC Bill through the full State House, passed a resolution through Philadelphia City Council in support of Ranked Choice voting, knocked thousands of doors, onboarded dozens of folks into our movement, and so much more. We have celebrated many of our leaders' firsts, and we are excited for many more to come.

We are ramping up pressure all across the state, and we are seeing the ways power responds to our efforts. **We are in this work for the long haul, and we need your support to sustain the momentum we have built.**

Please donate an amount that feels meaningful to you.

Donation Information

To contribute by mail, please make your check out to either 'March On Harrisburg Education Fund' (to make a 501c3 tax deductible contribution) or 'March On Harrisburg Inc.' (to make a contribution to our 501c4) and send it to:

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