



Testimony to Committee on Human Services Council of the District of Columbia

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March 1, 2019

Good morning Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee on Human Services. My name is Martin Booker, and I am a Senior Program Manager of the DC-based non-profit organization Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB).

Today it is my honor to provide testimony before this Committee to discuss the partnership CAAB has with the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Through our partnership with DHS, CAAB is working to assist low- and moderate-income DC residents to get on the path toward taking control of their finances, increase their savings and build wealth for a better future.

For close to a year, CAAB has been partnering with the DHS Family Services Administration to provide financial capability services to underserved and economically vulnerable District residents. On an annual basis, we interact with 125 families to administer the Flexible rent subsidy pilot program. We have integrated our financial education, credit counseling, and financial coaching services with rental assistance to impact families served through this pilot program. CAAB has found this program to be innovative and impactful on the lives of families in DC.

Since spearheading the execution of this program, CAAB has seen early signs of success in the flexible rent model. Families are in stabilized housing environments and more invested in their living conditions as a result of this program. During one-on-one financial coaching, CAAB sees how much an additional \$600 a month or a few months of full rent payments can make the difference of a family being able to sustain in the midst of a simple hardship such as a family emergency that causes a few days out of work without pay. Participants in the program have been diligent in managing their family finances, but after working with financial coaches at CAAB and getting a second opinion on their budget, families are much better equipped to manage their household finances. While the Flexible rent subsidy program is focused on preventing homelessness for families that are working but making low wages, we believe that this program will have a much greater impact on the families' stabilization and upward mobility. We look forward to witnessing some of the additional impacts that this will potentially have on families and property owners in DC as a result of this program.

Moreover, we are working with DHS to inform all DHS clients of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). For the past four decades, the EITC has been considered the most effective poverty



alleviation program in the nation. The ability of DHS to enable CAAB to raise EITC awareness is very important and we are very excited about this expansion of our partnership.

Since we are in the middle of the 2019 tax season, we are kindly requesting that you work with us to ensure all of your constituents are aware of the economic power of the EITC and of the high quality, trusted and free tax preparation services available to them in all 8 wards and online.

We recognize and thank Laura Zeilinger and the team involved in the Flexible Rent subsidy program for their leadership in expanding our partnership and delivery of services to more DHS clients.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.