



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

**Martin Booker, Senior Program Manager
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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). Furthermore, we kindly request your support to approve the FY20 budget requested for 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 over 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. To the best of our knowledge, it is the only program of its kind in the nation.

In leading the operations of this pilot program, CAAB has been able to learn about how DC Flex rent has benefitted the lives of the participants. One participant stated that the first year of Flex Rent has allowed her to catch-up on her bills, increase her credit score and provide financial stability for her family. We have seen that participants are able to maintain on-time rent payments throughout the year. As stated by one participant “After continuously paying rent on time due to the Flex Rent funding, I did not want to begin paying my rent late again.” The families in the program have goals of funding their children’s college education, buying homes or raising their children in a safer community. The flex rent program is making these possibilities more attainable. While Flex Rent will provide stability, we believe that this program can assist with upward mobility for participants as well.

Considering we are 5 days away from the end of the 2019 tax season, we are also reminding all Flex Rent participants and all Washingtonians to file their taxes and take advantage of the economic power of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).



We recognize and thank DHS Director, Laura Zeilinger, and the team at the Family Services Administration for their leadership in the Flex Rent Program. In order to ensure that more households are financially empowered through this innovative program and other initiatives and services offered by DHS, we kindly request your support to approve the FY20 budget requested for DHS.

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