



## **Testimony to Committee on Labor and Workforce Development Council of the District of Columbia**

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Good morning Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. My first name is Joseph and my last name is Leitmann-Santa Cruz. I am the Acting Executive Director of the DC-based non-profit organization Capital Area Asset Builders (CAAB).

Today it is my honor to provide testimony before this Committee re the partnerships CAAB has with the Department of Employment Services (DOES).

Through our partnerships with DOES, 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 the past four and a half years, CAAB has been partnering with DOES to provide financial capability services to underserved and economically vulnerable District residents. On an annual basis, we work with over 1,000 District residents who benefit from the services provided by Project Empowerment and DC Career Connections. We have integrated our financial education, credit counseling, and financial coaching services with workforce development and life skill services provided to them at DOES.

Moreover, under the leadership of Dr. Morris-Hughes in FY2019, a matched savings program was launched for the benefit of DOES clients who receive assistance in being placed in a job and achieve non-subsidized employment on their own merit. Each program participant is incentivized to open a bank account, save and use the match provided to them for asset building purposes: pay for college or vocational school, rent, purchase a vehicle, etc. This is an impactful co-investment between DOES and the hard working graduates of their programs. Real impact is happening because of this innovative program. We strongly recommend that DOES continues to offer this service to more of its clients and kindly request that this Committee fully support this wealth creation strategy.

Moreover, we are working with DOES to inform all DOES clients on 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 DOES to enable CAAB to raise EITC awareness is very important. Through the DC EITC Campaign, we are looking into having Washingtonians who received subsidized employment income from DOES, get EITC



notifications as well as direct linkages to free tax preparation services. 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 Dr. Morris-Hughes for her leadership in expanding our partnership and delivery of services to more DOES clients.

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