



**CLIENT
LEADERSHIP
COUNCIL**



The Client Leadership Council

*A New Model for Empowering the
Community Members We Serve*

In October 2020, the Capital Area Food Bank convened our inaugural Client Leadership Council (CLC) to amplify the voices of the people we serve.

As the anchor of the Greater Washington region's hunger relief infrastructure, the food bank has long witnessed how decisions and policies that affect our clients often exclude the voices of those most impacted. The CLC is a model that seeks to upend that reality, providing an opportunity for our clients to use the power of their lived experiences to shape public policy, influence press and media, and inform the direction of the food bank's programs.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL?

The CLC is an annual advocacy training program that brings together up to 24 clients from across our service region to create change by telling their stories. This report provides an overview of the CLC's innovative model, which has garnered the attention of local, state, and national organizations, advocates, policymakers, and foundations.



CLC Member Kim Harris speaking alongside Congressman Jim McGovern pushing for the Biden Administration to host a White House Conference to End Hunger, October 26, 2021

**Our inaugural class represents
the first of many in a pipeline
of client leaders who are eager
to effect change throughout the
food bank's service area.**

THE CURRICULUM

Over the course of the program, CLC members engage in a curriculum based on a model of leadership that builds out a story of self-narrative to influence the hearts and minds of policymakers and the general public. There is power in the stories of our clients, and the curriculum encourages members to employ the authenticity and emotions of their own lived experience to influence change, change perceptions, and drive progress. The food bank supports CLC members in using their public narrative to further influence three areas where our clients' voices are historically underrepresented: policy, press, and programming.

POLICY

The food bank provides tailored support to CLC members as they self-select their own policy priorities, guiding members through individual advocacy plans. Additionally, the food bank identifies opportunities for members to get involved in our ongoing legislative efforts with advocacy organizations, administrators, and policymakers.

PRESS

Based on our intimate understanding of each client's narrative, CAFB leverages its relationships with local, state, and national media outlets to provide CLC members with media opportunities that can help to influence public awareness and public opinion. We provide media training and support for members prior to engagements.

PROGRAMMING

Over the course of the program, the CLC class gradually learns more about CAFB's operations, including how and where we distribute food. Members serve as thought leaders for CAFB leadership and program staff in influencing programmatic shifts, operational planning, and ultimately, how the food bank is taking steps to enable brighter futures.

Staying true to CAFB's values and our strategy to narrow the economic divide and instill equity, each CLC member is paid a living wage stipend for their time in trainings, external meetings, press appearances, and food bank feedback sessions. Additionally, the food bank subsidizes all transportation costs to and from meetings and events.

INAUGURAL CLC CLASS IMPACT METRICS

\$26,000
paid in living
wage stipends

44 Lyft rides covering
641 miles for advocacy,
press, & event activities

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The Capital Area Food Bank's Client Leadership Council is an incredible leadership model ... I've had the privilege of speaking with its members. Their stories have stuck with me and continue to inspire our work to end food insecurity in this country. I'm proud to work shoulder to shoulder with the CLC as they build the type of movement it takes to finally end hunger in America once and for all.

—CONGRESSMAN JIM McGOVERN,
CHAIRMAN OF THE U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES,
CO-CHAIR OF THE U.S. HOUSE HUNGER CAUCUS

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The food bank conducts a comprehensive recruitment process to solicit applications from clients who represent the faces, stories, and perspectives of food insecurity in the region. To do so, we lean on our nonprofit partner network, direct distribution channels, the advocacy community, social service organizations, food councils, and policymakers to nominate and encourage individuals struggling with food insecurity to participate.

Each applicant is chosen through a two-step interview process, intended to ensure they are currently experiencing food insecurity, attending CAFB or partner network food distributions, utilizing social safety net programs, and are comfortable building out their skillsets and desire to share their story as an advocate. Applicants are accepted on a rolling basis, and our first recruitment process resulted in 24 clients joining the inaugural class, which was formally launched in October 2020.

THE EXPERIENCE

CLC members engage in monthly skills trainings, three day-long convenings, and ongoing dialogue with CAFB staff. The food bank views every touchpoint with a CLC member as a chance to learn and an opportunity to serve. Members receive training from respected experts across the region, with content designed to instill confidence, eliminate stigma, hone clients' public speaking skills, and build clients' power to craft self-narrative, all of which grows their capacity to work with policymakers and influence press and media.

Over the course of the program, each training and touchpoint coincides with workbook chapters broken up into three main stages of development:



These chapters are intended to guide the members through a strategic growth process of skills building and leadership development. Additionally, the program is intentionally designed to build trust and community amongst the members so that they can depend on one another, as well as the food bank, in their lifelong journey of advocacy.

To graduate, members are required to maintain regular attendance at virtual trainings and stay in contact with food bank staff when ongoing policy, press, or programming opportunities arise. The inaugural class graduated 18 CLC members, a 75 percent graduation rate.

SNAPSHOT OF INAUGURAL MEMBER PERSPECTIVES

The inaugural class represented a snapshot of our clients and the various factors that cause them, and their families, to be in need of food.



13 parents and
4 grandfamilies



2 veteran
households



2 college students and
8 college graduates



6 individuals
with disabilities



3 immigrants



3 formerly incarcerated
individuals



5 individuals who have
experienced or are experiencing
homelessness

INAUGURAL CLC CLASS IMPACT METRICS

16 skills trainings and **3** convenings
provided to the inaugural CLC class



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I fought myself to tell my story. But what the food bank did was help me break that barrier. I came home thinking about it and I said, “No, even if it’s one person that [my story] will help, I think I’ve done my best.”

—DZIGBORDI EGBENYA, GAITHERSBURG, MD
CLIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CLASS 1.0
2020–2021

IMPACT, BY THE NUMBERS

The inaugural CLC class graduated in December of 2021. Each member, by their own telling, was deeply impacted by the program. Summary highlights of their accomplishments across policy, press, and programming are below:

POLICY

METRIC	HIGHLIGHTS
15 TOUCHPOINTS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS	<p>Dgizbordi Egbenya, U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern: The Power of Voice, CAFB CLC Convening, June 23, 2021</p> <p>Jacqui Seay, Prince George’s County Council Chair, Todd Turner: The Power of Voice, CAFB CLC Convening, June 23, 2021</p>
8 POLICIES INFLUENCED AND/OR PASSED	<p>Joussell Lopez, Virginia General Assembly, March 12, 2021, HB2123—The Virginia Dream Act</p> <p>Marvena Alston, Washington DC, FY22 Mayoral Budget, June 3, 2021 —Fair Shot DC: Food Access Investments in the FY22 Budget</p>
2 GOVERNMENTAL TESTIMONIES	<p>Odessa Davis, U.S. House Agriculture Committee, May 26, 2021: The Future of SNAP: Moving Past the Pandemic</p> <p>Vanessa Pierre, Maryland General Assembly Appropriations Committee, February 10, 2021: Testimony of Support of House Bill 0101, Heat and Eat Program</p>

IMPACT, BY THE NUMBERS

PRESS

METRIC	HIGHLIGHTS
8 NATIONAL FEATURES	<p>Shauna Gray & Amanda Scott, ABC News—<i>Good Morning America</i>, November 20, 2020: Families Fighting to Feed Children as Coronavirus Pandemic Continues to Impact Jobs</p> <p>Vanessa Pierre, <i>The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell</i>, July 16, 2021: Mother who received Child Tax Credit payment: ‘That’s my Grocery Budget’</p>
7 VOICES OF ADVOCACY BLOG POSTS	<p>Shonnie Jones, <i>Voices of Advocacy—Capital Area Food Bank</i>, May 19, 2021</p> <p>James Littlejohn, <i>Voices of Advocacy—Capital Area Food Bank</i>, November 11, 2020</p>
5 LOCAL FEATURES	<p>Odessa Davis, WAMU NPR Affiliate, October 2, 2020: Thousands Of Families In The D.C. Region Could Lose Crucial Food Assistance If SNAP Benefits Are Cut</p> <p>Melody Lawson, McKinsey & Company, October 16, 2021: Expanding services for food insecure families in the Nation’s Capital</p>
3 SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS	<p>Jocelyn Orr-Thompson, <i>President Joe Biden: A Weekly Conversation: On the Line with Jocelyn</i>, March 12, 2021</p> <p>Joussell Lopez, <i>U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern & Soledad O’Brien: Student Hunger in America</i>, May 26, 2021</p>
1 PRESS CONFERENCE	<p>Kimberly Harris, <i>White House Conference to End Hunger</i>, Washington, DC, October 26, 2021</p>
1 OPINION EDITORIAL	<p>Joussell Lopez, <i>Move Forward in Support of DREAMers</i>, May 5, 2021</p>

PROGRAMMING

METRIC	HIGHLIGHTS
8 DISTRIBUTION LOCATIONS ADDED	<p>Curbside Groceries Truck, DC Ward 8. Members recommended the inclusion of the United Planning Organization, Petey Greene Community Service Center for a scheduled, regular stop for the grocery truck.</p>
3 FOCUS GROUPS HOSTED	<p>Distributional Feedback Planning, Focus Groups—May 2021: Food bank staff held focus groups with members based on location and perspective to support annual operating planning.</p>
2 RESEARCH STRATEGIES INFLUENCED	<p>Child and Young Adult Research Project: Members indicated that a focus on nutrition needs and deficiencies, by age, is needed to better serve the community. The food bank’s food resourcing team is now sourcing product with this level of detail.</p>
1 PROGRAM MENU REVISED	<p>The Commodity Supplemental Food Program in DC and Maryland: Now offers fresh produce to compliment monthly food boxes.</p>

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE INAUGURAL CLIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CLASS



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I remember when the article was published with Delegate Lopez, I thought, “It is happening. I am going to college.” I do not have to pay out-of-state tuition, and otherwise I wouldn’t have been able to afford to finish college at all. This is going to open the door for so many people, including my sister. Having a small part of that is life changing.

—JOUSSELL LOPEZ

Jousell Lopez, 22 ALEXANDRIA, VA

Jousell Lopez tells the story of the two most formative experiences in his life that shaped who he is today, both of which came within days of one another in two different countries. The first, surviving a dangerous trek from Nicaragua at the age of 14 to escape civil war and to pursue asylum in the United States. The second, as he crossed over from Mexico into Texas, his father held him and said, “Estudia para que tengas una mejor vida que nosotros.” Translation: “Study so that you have a better life than us.” It was the first piece of advice his father gave him after that treacherous journey. Those words not only fueled Jousell to become the first in his family to graduate high school, and go to college, they inspired him to leverage his story to create change through the Client Leadership Council.

Jousell noted the CLC allowed him to find his voice, and to use it for a greater good. **“Through this process, I have learned that there are so many places to make a difference, and that my voice matters. Without this**

program, my story would have sat in the dark, and because of [it], my story has truly shined, and I have been able to advocate on behalf of my community.”

Jousell noted that the program provided so much more than just an ability to share one’s story—he was impressed by the emphasis on strategic thinking to effect policy change: **“There has to be a strategy behind change. And that is what we learned in the program: what the ask is, who to ask, and how to approach it—now I have that strategy. I know that my story needs to play a role, but it is only one part of a bigger fixture to move the needle.”** As part of his CLC experience, Jousell connected with Delegate Alfonso Lopez of the Virginia Assembly, an elected official who shares a story very similar to his own. Jousell advocated to push through the Virginia Dream Act, a piece of legislation that will allow Jousell to receive in-state tuition assistance and an ability to draw financial aid as an undocumented immigrant.

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The food insecurity is still here. It's larger than Congress, it's larger than Feeding America, it's larger than all of us. The Client Leadership Council provides a bridge of confidence, understanding, and empowerment that leads us to the right leaders, with a resolute and concrete ask for change.

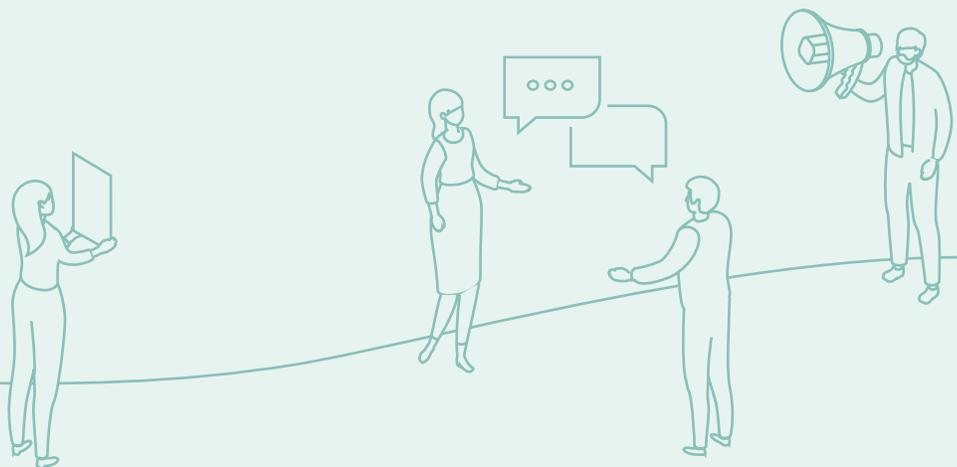
—KIMBERLY HARRIS



Kimberly Harris, 56 WARD 5, WASHINGTON, DC

Kimberly Harris is a mother, advocate, long-time DC resident, and a domestic violence survivor. Her experiences with food insecurity began as a child and returned in adulthood when a relationship she was in became violent. With the help of the District Alliance for Safe Housing, resources from the Capital Area Food Bank, and federal social safety net programs like SNAP, Kim has been able to support her family, obtain an MBA, and become CEO and co-founder of the nonprofit Women's HQ. Kim joined the Client Leadership Council to become a more effective advocate, and to share her lived experience to enact change in her community for those who have faced similar struggles.

She got the opportunity to do so when she was asked to speak alongside Congressman Jim McGovern, Senator Cory Booker, and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley at a **press conference to announce legislation** to convene a White House Conference to End Hunger. "I just printed the photo of me at that press conference and standing at that podium with the Capitol behind me," said Kimberly. "Every time I look up, I can't believe that's me." She shares that she is grateful to the CLC for making her a more innovative, effective, and patient advocate, and knows that she will carry over these lessons to advocate with her own nonprofit.



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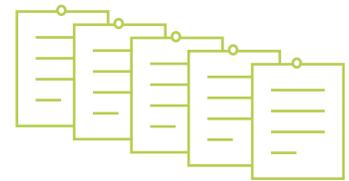
This program has a heartbeat. You can feel it. You can see it. I already feel empowered, and I have already discovered a part of my voice and story that I never knew existed.

—BEVERLY FLANAGAN, 73, SILVER SPRING, MD, CLIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CLASS, 2.0, 2021–2022



AN ENDURING LEADERSHIP PIPELINE: CLIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL 2.0

The inaugural class laid the foundation for a client leadership model that will be replicated annually to build a pipeline—and ultimately a chorus—of client voices. The food bank’s second Client Leadership Council cohort was launched in October 2021, building upon the first council to influence public opinion, inform operations, and help guide our policy platform and advocacy priorities. Each class will contribute a sample of client feedback and perspectives—providing continuous improvement to the model, the curriculum, and the impact of this program on our clients, our food bank, and our community.



5 organizational curriculums have been influenced by the Client Leadership Council model

To see the Client Leadership Council program workbook or other materials, please [click here](#).

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SUPPORTING THE POWER OF CLIENTS & COMMUNITY

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