

**Congressman Jim McGovern – Visit to Capital Area Food Bank – June 23, 2021**  
**Client Leadership Council Convening: The Power of Voice**  
**Client Leadership Council Member Testimonies**

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**Dzibordi Egbenya:**

My name is Dzibordi Egbenya, I am from Ghana and live in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I have four (4) kids, two (2) girls and two (2) boys. I have a bachelor's degree in Theater Arts, Dance major. I was a teacher in Ghana for fifteen (15) years at the Ministry of Education in the Non-Formal education program developing adults learning to read and write and becoming self-sufficient but I wanted a new adventure so I moved to the United States with my permanent resident's visa in 1995, where my eldest sister lived.

Two months of arrival, I moved to take a dance consulting job at California State Universities of San Marcos and San Diego for six (6) months and there was a promise of an employment that didn't happen. I moved back to Maryland to Teacher assistant job at Howard University, which also failed. I started work at Walmart and had two part-time jobs to pay bills. I left Walmart after injury to Home Depot for a better pay. I got injured again.



After three (3) years of rehabilitation, I enrolled into Physical Therapy Aide program through MontgomeryWorks and Montgomery College and worked at Washington Hospital Center. I thought I was on track, to move into Dance therapy, injury struck again. I was asked to wheel a 570 pound man plus a 100 pound wheelchair to the gym and back to his room during which I tore some tissues in my back and the tendon in my right shoulder. I had surgery to remove the tendon to reduce the pain, which helped but my Dance therapy dreams died, and my work life came to a halt in 2010, I was in rehab. for four (4) years. I received worker's compensation during this time but wasn't enough for a family of four (4), myself, my husband and our two boys. During this time, my husband had and was recovering from Pulmonary Embolism (blood clot in his lungs) and worked part-time with a security company and suffered another PE in 2014.

Was difficult to make ends meet and being evicted multiple times - I mean over 10 times. My family and I experienced homelessness, moving between hotels eventually to a shelter for six (6) month with the help of a Case worker DHHS Germantown, who wouldn't allow us to sleep in our car when I mentioned that. And he made sure that our family didn't split up. We applied for Temporary Cash Assistance which lasted 2 years, enrolled in ResCare for employment and volunteering in many organizations with the support of Maryland state, but no employment. We are still not out on our own yet, but with the help of various programs – HIP for housing, SNAP formerly Food stamp, SSID, SSI. Economic Impact Payments/Stimulus - we are doing better.

My older son is 22 and in the military and the youngest 16 in High school. I'm in the Client Leadership Council with an ambition to advocate for Veteran homelessness being inspired by my son to contribute to my community. I'm pursuing my master's degree in mental health counseling, and I'm also learning to become a real estate advisor.

Motto of a soccer club in Ghana reads "never say die until the bones are rotten" - and that means it's never over until God says so. Through all that my family has and is going through, we have faith, which makes us believe there is hope. I have hope. Do you?