

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

Odessa Davis:

Good afternoon. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Odessa Davis. I am a mom, an educator, and a hunger advocate with the Capital Area Food Bank and Manna.

As a young student, I followed my dream to become a chef. I received my Associates Degree from Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Miami. During that time I had a beautiful baby boy and became a single mom. I had to change my focus to the immediate future, and put my dream on hold to start working a minimum wage job. I had to put my pride aside for needed government assistance. SNAP helped me pay my bills and decrease stress of affording groceries for the two of us.



When I started working for Montgomery County Public School as a special ED Paraeducator, my SNAP assistance decreased to nothing and I stumbled over the benefit cliff. Even though I have a full-time job, I have to work four (4) jobs and rely on free breakfast and reduced lunch for my son. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, three of my jobs were closed. My life became overwhelmingly stressful. To survive this pandemic, I had to completely use all my savings as I was repeatedly denied unemployment aid for almost a year. But there was finally a light at the end of the tunnel. I received a PEBT Card which helped me buy nutritious food such as meat and veggies. When my PEBT card ran out I relied on the Food Bank. Even though I was struggling, I volunteered to make food for my friends and family that were struggling even more than I was.

I eventually went back to school to major in Business Management. I couldn't have done it if it wasn't for my support system: scholarships, family, friends, and coworkers. I'm one of the lucky ones, there are a lot of people who do not have the support system that I did. During school I met other moms in the same situation as me. So I started a support group called Back on Track and I am proud of the 50% of my members that graduated. In May 2020 I graduated from Montgomery College with an AA in Business Management with honors. I want a better life for my son. So, I updated my dream; to becoming a restaurant owner.