

Message from Executive Director

Augustin Ntabaganyimana



Subject: Introducing the New Director and Assistant Director of Benefits Access

#TeamDHS,

As we've shared over the past few months, we are establishing the Office of Benefits Access (OBA) within the Family Investment Administration (FIA). This newly created office will advance our work to combat childhood poverty and ensure every Marylander is better informed about how to access the benefits they deserve.

We are thrilled to announce that **Graham O'Neill** and **James (JD) Douglass-Robinson** will be joining us as the **Director** and **Assistant Director** of the Office of Benefits Access, respectively. Graham will begin his role on January 22, 2025, and JD will join our team on February 5, 2025. Together, they will spearhead our department's modern strategy to expand community outreach, reduce caseload churn, build community partnerships, and streamline applications to ensure every Marylander has access to the benefits they deserve. Additionally, the OBA will partner with the Cash Campaign of Maryland to bring Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) to local Departments of Social Services.

Graham O'Neill, Director of Benefits Access

Graham is an accomplished leader with over 10 years of experience in program management, policy advocacy, and community outreach, specializing in enhancing public assistance programs. Graham is committed to closing the gap between customers and the benefits for which they are eligible. He has a proven track record of building effective teams, forming strategic partnerships, and designing impactful, large-scale programs.

Graham began his career at Benefits Data Trust in 2013, helping customers access critical benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid. He has since held key leadership roles in the government and nonprofit sectors, including Director of Partnerships at Campaign for Working Families and Administrator at the Philadelphia Department of Revenue. Before joining our team,

Graham served as Tax Policy Strategist and Director of the Taxpayer Opportunity Network where he became a leading expert in tax credits and free tax preparation services.

Graham remains active in advocacy work, serving on the Internal Revenue Services' Electronic Tax Administration Advisory Committee, where he advocates for better tax support for families. Graham earned a degree in History from Dickinson College.

James (JD) Douglass-Robinson, Assistant Director of Benefits Access

JD brings a wealth of experience in anti-hunger advocacy and policy work. Most recently, he served as a Senior Anti-Hunger Program Associate at Maryland Hunger Solutions, an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). In this role, JD focused on improving access to and the quality of SNAP in Maryland, leading efforts to engage with legislators, state agencies, and community organizations. Among his achievements are advocating for legislation to increase the SNAP minimum for seniors, developing SNAP and TCA reimbursement plans, and supporting Maryland's participation in the Heat & Eat and Restaurant Meals Programs.

JD is a strong advocate for community-driven change and believes in the power of grassroots movements to shape effective policy. Throughout his career, he has worked to expand SNAP access through outreach initiatives with community organizations and volunteers. JD holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from McDaniel College. In his personal time, he enjoys rock climbing, cooking, and spending time with his two dogs, Kiki and Mochi.

Please join us in welcoming Graham and JD as they begin their new roles.