

PHFA Kathy A Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship

2025 Fellows

Marrea Walker-Smith



Biography: Marrea Walker-Smith, designs and implements high school business courses for Devon Preparatory School. She is a consultant with the Chester Housing Authority and County of Chester Housing Authority. As a project consultant for the Chester Housing Authority, she secured over 7 million dollars to renovate the housing projects in the City of Chester. Walker-Smith is a former consultant with the Chester County Economic Development Council and served 17 years in Chester city government. She currently is working on a master's degree in economics and entrepreneurship for educators at the University of Delaware. She holds numerous degrees, including two other master's degrees and writing her doctorate dissertation which will align with her research as a policy fellow.

Project Summary: African Americans who reside in low-income housing developments face significant barriers to financial independence due to systemic inequality in education, employment, and financial literacy. As a former resident of a low-income and high crime housing development in the City of Chester, this project seeks to provide an emic perspective which is an immersion into the culture to better understand behaviors and root causes. There is limited research that correlates the role of financial literacy as a solution to unemployment, poverty, and safety. The project will also explore the role of conspicuous consumption in financial literacy to better understand how high good items signal wealth among residents who live in poverty. The goal is to collaborate with residents to develop a financial education workshop and e-book to help housing providers and residents better understand the role of financial literacy on poverty. Participants of the study will work with the researcher to provide culturally appropriate content for the workshop and e-book. The goal is to capture the cultural norms, storytelling, and current trends in money management.