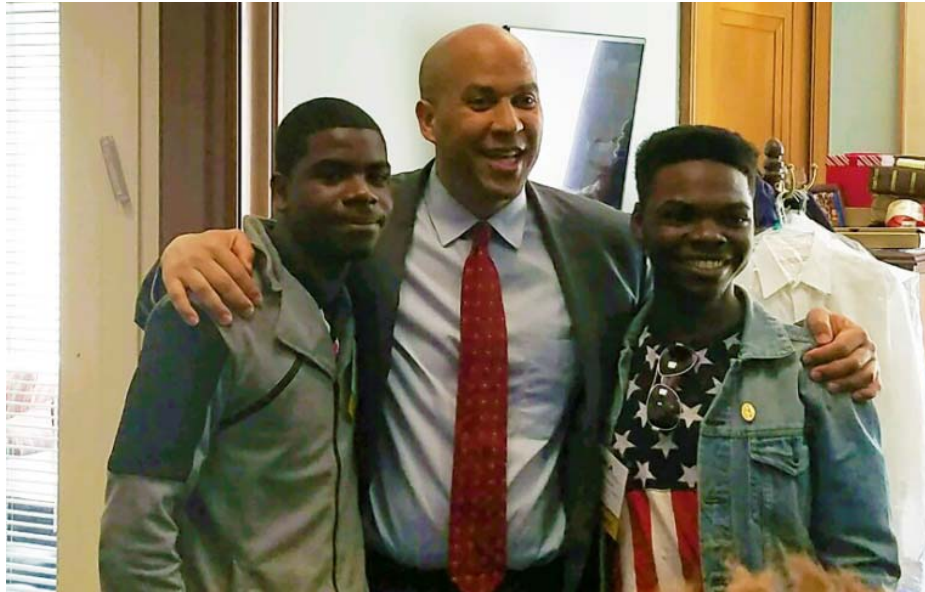




## CAU Members Make Waves in Washington Advocating for Supports for Children



*Robert Brown (left) and Barshay Stinson (right) were able to speak with US Senator Corey Booker regarding the need for supports for adolescents at the annual CWLA Summit in Washington, DC.*

CAU Members Robert Brown and Barshay Stinson represented Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and recently attended the Child Welfare League of America Summit held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Washington DC. The annual conference welcomed members of the Child Welfare League of America, advocates and partners from across the United States and invited the groups to gather and address the needs for new investments in children and strives to providing permanency and safety for children.

Brown and Stinson share the role of president of CAU's Member Action Committee (MAC) which advocates for the rights of members within the agency and the community, and for other at-risk youths, as well. They are members of CAU's Transitional Opportunities Programs (TOP), living within the agency's independent supported housing programs.

This 'dynamic duo' as they refer to themselves, were chosen to represent Community Access Unlimited at the summit because of their leadership position within MAC and also because they both passionately believe that youth are facing challenges in their own neighborhood and the time to help is now. The members participated in conversations and challenged participants to join them in being a part of the solution.

"I went because I want to see a change in our community and because I wanted to see who else is on our side," Stinson said. "Children shouldn't be homeless and not able to eat. And the people who have the power to change it need to do something, and that is what I went down to say."

The young men were warmly welcomed to the conference by US Senator Cory Booker, Congressman Frank LoBiondo, and Congressman Donald NoCross. Senator Booker spent time speaking with Stinson and Brown and listened while they spoke of their concerns, including the availability of housing, clothing, and food for at-risk youth.

"This year I mainly listened," said Brown. "But it was great being able to speak with Senator Booker and talk about our ideas for ending child abuse and child homelessness. I learned a lot from the conference including more about how politics work and how many people support our quest to end child homelessness in the community."

Topics at the summit included brainstorming strategy for eliminating child abuse, child homelessness, the drug epidemic amongst youth, and the depletion of funding for youth-supporting initiatives.

Howard Wingard, co-advisor of MAC, praised both young men for their participation in the summit, and spoke of how proud he was that they represented CAU and New Jersey so well.

"Robert and Barshay's participation in the summit was a great experience for both young men and for the summit's participants as well," said Wingard. "Both contributed a unique perspective on topics of discussion amongst the attendees and made connections with other agencies outside of New Jersey. We learned a lot of how other agencies are helping the youth they support and how discovered opportunities for collaboration. This way we can continue to make a difference in the lives of so many youth in New Jersey."

### **About CAU**

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 37th year in 2016, supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU currently serves more than 6,000 individuals and families, with the number served growing each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.