



## **Jefferson's first 'Raimy Fellows' class meets D.C. policymakers, lawmakers**

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Washington, D.C. - Graduates of a new Jefferson Educational Society leadership program are wrapping up two busy days in Washington, D.C.

Known as the Raimy Fellowship Program, it combines enhanced practical civic engagement with leadership theory. The trip caps months of research and studies that comes together in one final report they're handing to lawmakers and top policy leaders.

Those meetings started on Thursday when the Fellows and executives from the Jefferson stopping by some well-known D.C. think-tanks including the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Brookings Institution and more.

On Friday, they visited Capitol Hill where they toured the Capitol complex and met with Congressman Mike Kelly and his staff before meeting with staffers from top Democrats including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"They actually had the opportunity to meet and interact with serious, serious policymakers and scholars who are doing the same work they were doing in Erie, but just doing it on a larger stage," said Andrew Roth, director of the Fellowship and the Jefferson's scholar-in-residence.

This is the first year for the Raimy Fellowship program, which was born out of the Jefferson's Civic Leadership Academy. A total of 23 members graduated from the Academy's most recent class.

During the Fellowship's initial class, students studied various causes and effects of poverty in the Erie region, everything from education and creating jobs to food deserts and more. All of that is wrapped up in a report titled "Trapped in Poverty: Accessibility, Availability, and Income in Erie County, Pennsylvania", which the Fellows are giving to lawmakers and policy leaders in hopes of finding solutions at both the local and national levels.

"Through this program, I've been able not only to meet not only lawmakers in the City of Erie, lawmakers on the state and national level, and just get more involved in my community as a whole," said YahMoorah Shakoor Hooker, a Raimy Fellowship graduate who focused her research on urban farming and fresh food within the City of Erie. "(with hopes) that I can actually launch this project, especially on the lower east side where there hasn't been much concentration on agriculture."