

**ROCHESTER-MONROE COUNTY ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVE PROPOSAL
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

December 27, 2014

Joseph D. Morelle, New York State Assembly Majority Leader
Lovely A. Warren, Mayor, City of Rochester
Maggie Brooks, County Executive, County of Monroe
Peter C. Carpino, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Rochester

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

-Niccolo Machiavelli

The traditional models for addressing poverty in the United States aren't working. Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty" over half a century ago. In real terms, we are losing that war. The truth is the fragmented, disconnected and disparate approach to dealing with children and families in poverty is inefficient, and worse, ineffective. We don't need more programs and more fragmentation. We need to build an entirely new system. In fact, calling the present effort a "system" at all is a gross overstatement.

Defining what is wrong is the easy part of our work: funding streams are too rigid; information is fragmented and incomplete; and existing programs are not integrated. We have failed to align incentives properly as individuals on public assistance are penalized if and when they seek a better paying job or begin to acquire savings, forcing them to remain on social services instead of helping them break the cycle of poverty. Far too many of our children are failing in school. They and their parents lack the soft and hard skills to find and keep a job. Businesses have no incentives to train or hire the poor. The eligibility requirements that were designed to offer accountability have become barriers that prevent people from accessing needed services. People have been enabled to be dependent.

If the nation's war on poverty is being lost, Rochester ranks as among the worst of the war zones. Rochester, New York, once the envy of communities across our state is now the third poorest city in America among comparably-sized cities, with the second highest child poverty rate in the country.

That's why Rochester and Monroe County's public, private, and nonprofit leaders have come together in an unprecedented way over the past three months not to despair about what is, but

instead to re-imagine what could be. Our vision is to *eliminate childhood poverty by ensuring that every child will have the opportunity to achieve the American dream, to live in a stable family environment where the promise of economic mobility is a reality.*

This is about creating equal opportunity.

We have the “community will” to create a new system that will be child-and family-centered and informed. It will be flexible, data-driven, and barrier-free. There will be no “wrong door” to access services. Full family assessments will be able to be completed online by any agency and services will be integrated and individualized for those requesting services. The restraints and restrictions of funding silos will be eased so needs will be met and opportunities created.

A fully integrated, coordinated, person-focused, and data-driven system will move people in poverty from dependence to independence, from being enabled to being supported and encouraged, and from receiving entitlements to being worthy of investments. Given the right tools and resources, the poor will be able to assume more responsibility for their own futures.

Eliminating child poverty in Rochester and Monroe County requires wholesale changes in our current systems, programs, and policies. More importantly, it requires a new attitude and belief. John Kennedy once said, “Our problems are made by man, therefore they may be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings.” The time is now to solve the problem of poverty.

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The Rochester region will eliminate childhood poverty by ensuring that every child will have the opportunity to achieve the American dream, to live in a stable family environment where the promise of economic mobility is a reality.

Rochester, New York: A Tale of Two Cities

Rochester has a long and proud history of economic prosperity. From its beginnings as the nation's largest flour-producing city and a major trade center along the Erie Canal, Rochester remains an important industrial center and a leader in the fields of imaging and optics.

Today, the Rochester and Monroe County community has transitioned from its "Big Three"-based economy of Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch & Lomb to a more diverse economy fueled in part by innovative start-up companies. Along with imaging and optics, key industries include photonics, computer and electronic products, health care, and advanced manufacturing. Rochester and Monroe County rank among the world's best metro economies based on income and employment, according to the Brookings Institution.

Clearly, great wealth exists here. Yet, today's Rochester is very much *a tale of two cities*. One Rochester is prospering. The other is in abject poverty.

- Rochester is the *third-poorest city* in America among comparably-sized cities
- Rochester's child poverty rate is the *second highest* in the country, second only to Detroit

Seeking a Bold, Innovative Solution

Despite an array of traditional anti-poverty programs intended to raise families out of poverty, this community still faces a devastating and accelerating poverty crisis. Clearly, what is being done to address this issue is not working. Why?

- Funding streams are too rigid;
- People are penalized for taking initiative. Individuals on public assistance risk losing child care subsidies and other benefits if they move to a higher-paying job. A working mom should not lose her child-care subsidy because she gets a \$.10 per hour raise;
- Businesses aren't incentivized to take a risk with the working poor and to offer the training or create the jobs that can lift people out of poverty;
- Eligibility requirements create barriers that prevent people from getting services in one place and at one time;
- Current programs aren't integrated. For example, food programs allow a grandmother to eat at a senior center, her grandchildren to eat at an after-school program, and the mom to get groceries from a food pantry. Although the family's nutritional needs are being met, the programs aren't connected and the rules don't allow the family members to eat together.
- People are enabled to be dependent.

We need a more aggressive, innovative, and bold approach. If we are to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty, we need a new system – a comprehensive, holistic system that will revolutionize the way in which poverty, particularly childhood poverty, is addressed and allow the poor to achieve self-sufficiency.

This new system will be child-and family-centered and informed by those in need. It will be flexible, data-driven, and barrier-free. There will be no “wrong door” to access services because full assessments will be able to be completed by any agency online and services will be integrated and individualized for the people requesting services. The system will be flexible, without the constraint of funding silos and eligibility restrictions that keep people who need services from getting them.

We will build an integrated system that will move people in poverty from dependence to independence, and from simply receiving entitlements to being worthy of investments. Given the right tools and resources, those in need of services will be able to assume more responsibility for their own futures and the futures of those who will follow them. The system would reward families that take initiative and would encourage wealth accumulation for those moving off of public assistance.

Such a vision aligns with one of Governor Cuomo's top priorities -- to fight the concentration of poverty in New York State. With the Governor's leadership and support, Rochester and Monroe County are poised to design a major system that can achieve far better outcomes in addressing poverty than have been achieved in the past.

The Rochester-Monroe County Anti-Poverty Initiative is a United Way-led collaborative of public, private, and nonprofit organizations that have the collective will and have made the commitment to undertake the wholesale systemic, programmatic, and public policy changes required. A sampling of those proposed changes can be found in the Appendix.

Guiding Principles

As we undertake this work, we commit to:

- Engage and listen to the voices of the poor;
- Align and link existing service delivery systems and their funding streams;
- Prioritize and be intentional in our implementation;
- Ensure equity;
- Ensure that our work is sustainable and replicable;
- Measure and be accountable for improved outcomes for children and their families.

The Conceptual Framework: An Innovative, Integrated Comprehensive Approach

Rather than focus on the poverty epidemic by simply creating new programs, we will address it through an innovative, comprehensive, integrated, data-driven, and child- and family-centered

approach that will be informed by the poor themselves and designed *with, rather than for*, those who are impacted by the system.

Service providers, recipients, and funders together will identify key problems, collect and analyze data, and solicit ongoing input and feedback from the community. The approach taken will be transformational, requiring systemic, programmatic, and policy changes. We will analyze the effectiveness of current programs and adopt evidence-based and best practice models that have proven effective in other communities, including place-based service delivery and funding. We will create a data-driven and integrated path or stairway that will enable families to move out of poverty using five key drivers: jobs; education and skills training; housing; safe neighborhoods; and health and nutrition.

This innovative system will enable the 30,000 children in Rochester and Monroe County -- and their families -- to receive individualized support that focuses on outcomes. Through the extensive use of care coordinators and mentors, the new system will be integrated, seamless and holistic. Our success will no longer be measured by the health of our provider agencies but instead by the success and achievements of our clients.

The key to this system will be a centralized database that will ensure that every opportunity is provided for the family to succeed, while eliminating duplication and waste. Equally important, the database will track opportunities for system and program improvements; identify policies that unwittingly are creating barriers to success; and, ultimately, use predictive analytics to guide and support and create efficiencies for the dual-generation system of care.

The framework we are proposing will:

- Allow the opportunity to develop a centralized assessment of need and create individual action plans for participants. What are their hopes and dreams for themselves and their children? How can we integrate existing programs in new and enhanced ways to ensure that participants have the optimal opportunity for success?

- Allow us the opportunity to build on the formative data base system we have developed to track consumer activity and outcomes. We will identify opportunities to improve and enhance that database and, potentially, identify new technology partners to achieve our vision for this enhanced database.
- Utilize care coordination and implement the use of advocates, mentors, and coaches for children and families at every step of the process.
- Enhance how we coordinate and integrate services between and among local community agencies and begin to push boundaries of service and reimbursements by allowing agencies the flexibility to cross traditional reimbursement streams and ultimately offer the ideal service combination to achieve consumer goals.

A Model for the State

Under the leadership of Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Morelle, in collaboration with the Mayor of Rochester, the Monroe County Executive and United Way of Greater Rochester and on behalf of the entire community, we are seeking support from New York State for this unique and unified approach to eradicating childhood poverty.

This initiative has the support of our area's key community leaders, including representatives from government, business, labor, human services, health care, education, and foundations. With the leadership of Governor Cuomo, and support and commitment from the Legislature, Rochester and Monroe County can be a laboratory for finding an innovative solution to childhood poverty and serve as a model for the State and, perhaps, the nation.

We have the collective will to do this. Now is the time.

APPENDIX

Eliminating child poverty in Rochester and Monroe County will require wholesale changes in current systems, programs, and policies. An intelligent, consumer-informed re-design will shift from the current system that is program-focused, bureaucratic, and creates barriers to self-sufficiency, to one that is fully integrated, flexible, and re-aligns incentives to support individual independence. The following reflects the preliminary thinking of more than 100 representatives from all sectors in Rochester and Monroe County regarding some of the systemic, programmatic, and policy changes that might be considered.

Overall public policy changes might include:

- Offering incentives that create opportunity and empower people;
- Ensuring that funding streams are aligned and do not constrain the ability to address the most pressing issues facing a family;
- Addressing needs in a seamless and more holistic way;
- Addressing policies that are creating barriers that keep people from being successful;
- Moving from an approach that is subsidy- and entitlement-based to one that is focused on investing in people's advancement and success;
- Improving efficiencies for human service providers, including the streamlining of eligibility requirements to improve outcomes while maintaining accountability.

Other potential changes are outlined in the following table:

	Systemic Changes	Programmatic Changes	Public Policy Changes
Jobs	<p>Ease incentives on employers to provide jobs</p> <p>Make work pay for people in need through tax credits and child care assistance</p> <p>Invest in coaches</p> <p>Create paid training and apprenticeship programs</p>	<p>Expand job opportunities for teens (e.g., consider creating a KidsCorps that pays stipends for working over the summer)</p> <p>Provide entrepreneurship training and access to capital</p> <p>Provide flexibility to address needs without the restraint of eligibility restrictions that keep people from receiving services</p> <p>Offer incentives to employers who create on-the-job training opportunities</p> <p>Create a database that takes info from “any door” and tracks education, job skills training, to move people along a continuum of progress</p> <p>Create a dashboard that connects all agencies and providers</p> <p>Subsidize salaries for people in need (through NY Works or Rochester Works)</p>	<p>Ease use and access to subsidies, so employers want to participate</p> <p>Create a robust “jobs for youth” program with fewer restrictions and more flexibility to extend the skills training and compensation beyond the six months of summer.</p> <p>Give people the resources they say they need to connect to jobs so they can get and remain employed</p> <p>Incentivize nonprofits to collaborate more aggressively</p> <p>Make tax subsidies work better for local government</p> <p>Consider new approaches to addressing transportation needs</p>
Health & Nutrition	<p>Better integration in addressing physical, mental, and dental issues</p> <p>Use case management model to measure analytics and allow movement of people with secure info/tracking of services/etc.</p> <p>Make nutritious food more affordable and easily accessible</p>	<p>Make it easier for people to have whole-family food program solutions</p> <p>Get everyone who is eligible connected to anti-poverty federal programs</p> <p>Access programs to assist where/when the need happens – kids eat less in winter when families need to heat their homes</p> <p>Provide groceries on wheels (similar to meals on wheels)</p>	<p>Expand outlet points and the number of people who use fresh-connect funding</p> <p>Make certification programs for peer support more sufficient for need</p>

		Address social determinants of health	
	Systemic Changes	Programmatic Changes	Public Policy Changes
Education & Workforce Training	<p>Incentivize suburban districts beyond funding; re: the ability to add support services that affect all kids in the district</p> <p>Laws need to impact learning and not focus on what people can't do</p> <p>Increase number of social workers to work with families and reduce caseloads</p> <p>Create robust CTE programs for students and offer co-ops</p> <p>Take a person-centered approach vs. a system approach. Simplify this process to affect the people in the community; focus on a particular neighborhood – what do we need to do to help you get out of poverty?</p>	<p>Recognize the differences between wages and opportunities, between skilled, low-skilled and unskilled jobs; fill gaps through vocational training</p>	<p>Need adults to connect youth to services; provide a discipline they don't have in their lives</p> <p>Maintain child care subsidies for parents who get a sustained job, which they can't get if they don't have proper childcare (subsidies disappear once a person gets any type of job even if it's not self-sustaining)</p> <p>Change kindergarten selection process in City School District</p> <p>Provide mandatory universal full-day pre-K – and transportation -- to children at age 3</p>
Housing	<p>Eliminate security deposits as a roadblock to getting housing</p> <p>Homeless resolution strategy report commissioned by the city could provide a foundation for systemic change.</p> <p>Reduce inefficiencies based on what's required by the state – e.g., staff time spent tracking payment information for clients instead of spending time with clients; shelters granted the amount they know they need for the year instead of case by case submitting. so they can go through one auditing process</p> <p>Relax Section 8 rules to ensure kids can stay with their grandparents (grandparents are putting their grandchildren</p>	<p>Use incentive zoning as a vehicle for creative projects requiring developers to include a portion of all development as part of a subsidy program</p> <p>Promote the landlord/tenant agreement with county so that tenant doesn't have to pay security deposit and the county will cover damages (need to create awareness with landlords because many don't accept it)</p> <p>Provide support services after people get in a house (funding stream for getting someone housing is there, but not support)</p> <p>Revamp the 80/20 program so more people can participate.</p>	<p>Fund an enhanced shelter allowance payable to landlords that provide quality housing so families can remain in the same place/don't have to dislocate and disrupt children in school</p> <p>Change legislation so that once someone has found safe housing they can continue to receive support services</p> <p>Create access to other services, such as being able to open a bank account to encourage and allow low-income people to build up assets</p> <p>Provide financial education for families</p>

	into foster care because they will lose their funding)		
	Systemic Changes	Programmatic Changes	Public Policy Changes
Housing (Continued)	Enable landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers (15,000 people on the waiting list for Section 8 housing vouchers)		Provide or approve housing first, rather than making people prove they deserve housing or funding/is disabled, etc. If someone is homeless, case managers have to take too many steps to get someone into safe, housing; costs of these steps are too expensive to get someone into a housing program.
Safe Neighborhoods	<p>Create an online guidebook for how to help people in the community that are having issues (ties into the community database) and promote use of centralized information and referral service (2-1-1 or 3-11)</p> <p>Put money collected from drug arrests back into neighborhoods programs</p> <p>Invest in public art</p>	<p>Bringing trust back to neighborhoods through block parties, community gardens, etc., to get people to communicate with either other, have pride in their community</p> <p>Develop skillsets for inmates so they are more likely to be hired</p> <p>Incentivize businesses to hire former inmates</p> <p>Create incentives for business owners to hire neighborhood residents for façade improvements</p>	End policy of holding 16- & 17-year-olds as adults to keep these kids from being incarcerated, which changes them into a different person (NYS only one of two states that does this)

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