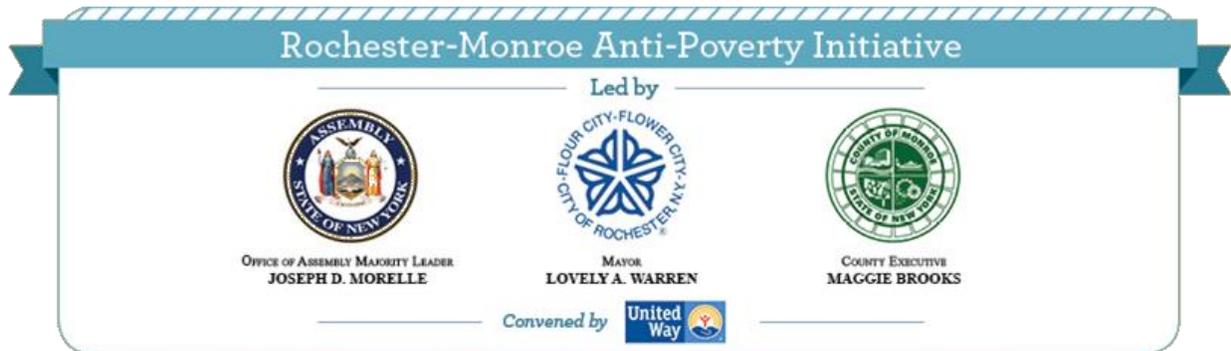


LIVE UNITED



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 17, 2015

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ROCHESTER-MONROE ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVE RELEASES PROGRESS REPORT

Findings point to community-wide, neighborhood based system of social support, providing early childhood supports, a robust mentor/navigator system

Rochester, NY – The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, convened by United Way of Greater Rochester, released its progress report today, unveiling the findings of months of work involving hundreds of community members. The report outlined key barriers facing people in Rochester living in poverty and recommendations for breaking the cycle of poverty.

“This report is the result of more than one thousand people working together for countless hours to make our community better,” said Fran Weisberg, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Rochester. “United Way is proud to bring together so many different voices, resources and organizations to reduce poverty in Rochester.”

“Over the past nine months, this Initiative has worked in partnership with the community to thoroughly examine the many barriers confronting families and individuals living in poverty and develop a plan that will confront these challenges head-on,” said Assembly Majority Leader Joseph D. Morelle. “Thanks to the collaboration and input of the community this report will help us take the first steps toward addressing the need for a fundamental change within the systems, service programs and policies that impact those most in need. Most importantly, this report signals that our community is coming together, united in the belief that we can and will restore the promise of the American dream for all.”

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“This report is a great start. But it is only a start”, said Mayor Lovely Warren. “Rochester’s poverty problem developed over a long period of time, and it is not going to go away overnight. If we are truly to address this problem, it is going to take the ongoing commitment of the many stakeholders who have already contributed to this process and more. But I am confident that by working together, we can address the issue of poverty and ultimately bring more jobs, safer more vibrant neighborhoods and better educational opportunities to our city.”

“I am proud to have joined my partners in government in the release of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative report” said County Executive Maggie Brooks. “Thanks to the hard work and input of the community, we have a report that will not just sit on a shelf, but will be in the hands of the Governor and local stakeholders. Through working group meetings, subject experts, and Town Hall public forums, we have captured the voices of individuals from all ends of the community.”

From May through July, Work Groups identified barriers in eight key focus areas; housing, jobs and workforce development, safe neighborhoods, education, transportation, childcare, justice and health and nutrition. The groups then developed recommendations to address each of the barriers. Three common themes that needed to be addressed for the implementation of all recommendations were consistent throughout all the focus areas:

- **Community Building:** A common theme expressed by people impacted by poverty is the desire to continue residing in their current neighborhoods. The condition, however, is that these neighborhoods meet their needs. These needs include quality affordable housing, access to nutritious foods, neighborhood safety, youth development, crisis service alternatives to arrest, community health campuses, local business development and job opportunities, transportation infrastructure and neighborhood community centers that connect individuals to appropriate education, training and other support services.
- **Structural Racism:** Structural racism can be defined as a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It points to dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead, it has been a feature of the social, economic, and political systems in which we all exist.

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We know that poverty disproportionately affects Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics in the City of Rochester. The issue is the ongoing effects of structural racism and bias, which continue as a major barrier for Blacks/African Americans and Hispanics as they attempt to break free of poverty.

- **Poverty-Induced Trauma:** Multiple studies of both children and adults living in poverty suggest the ongoing and continuous nature of stress arising from threats to well-being negatively affect cognitive function/executive functioning skills; in some cases this can result in barriers to performance, developmental progress, and goal attainment. “First, poverty creates powerful stresses that swamp our thinking and create a ‘bandwidth tax’ that decreases the quality of the decisions we make. And second, the stresses associated with poverty can alter the way the brain develops in children who are subjected to them.” ***For African Americans and Latinos who are living in poverty, structural racism and poverty-induced trauma compound one another and the impact is exponential.***

Informed by the common themes above and additional factors, 33 recommendations from the eight focus areas were ranked using a set of standardized criteria to evaluate all recommendations consistently. Three recommendations rose to the top:

- **Systems Design:** Designing a comprehensive, integrated system of social supports, in coordination with the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge planning effort.
- **Adult Mentoring/ Navigating:** Establishing an adult mentor/navigator role across the systems of support that helps working poor individuals to overcome barriers and acquire the resources, knowledge and skills necessary to attain and retain a living wage job and break the cycle of poverty.
- **Early Childhood Support:** Ensuring early childhood support that provides both high-quality, affordable, accessible and flexible childcare that parents need to engage in community, economic mobility, wellness-related activities and in-home parent training proven to give new parents the skills to succeed as their children’s first teachers.

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The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative followed a unique process that included community input and insight. Each Work Group included community members who were living in or had recently emerged from poverty, and weighted their recommendations and suggestions to ensure their voice was clearly heard. The initiative also engaged Cultural Brokers to bridge the various differences that existed among the participants, such as race, geography and socioeconomic status. Insights from people living in poverty were gathered through a qualitative study that was used to inform Work Group members of the challenges facing those living in poverty, and a Town Hall meeting and community survey were both used to gather community input.

The report also highlights the Initiative's goals, which include reducing poverty by:

- 15% by year 2020
- 30% by year 2025
- 50% by year 2030

During the next phase of its work, the Initiative will review current community assets and research solutions to implement the top recommendations and create work plans for each area to include key milestones and measures and in partnership with Governor Cuomo's Rochester Anti-poverty task force, identify necessary policy changes. Also beginning in October the IBM smarter cities team will arrive in Rochester to begin work on the integrated system of social supports. The IBM team is a result of an award by the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge grant to the City of Rochester for their work in conjunction with the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative.

For more information about the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, or to see the full report visit endingpovertynow.org.

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About the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative:

Convened by the United Way of Greater Rochester and led by Assembly Majority Leader Joseph D. Morelle, Mayor Lovely Warren and County Executive Maggie Brooks, and supported by over [100 organizations](#) throughout the region, the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative has set out to develop and implement a collaborative and community driven approach to eliminating poverty in the Greater Rochester community.

The Initiative's vision is to eliminate poverty by ensuring that every child lives in a stable family environment where the promise of economic mobility is a reality. To achieve this objective three core goals have been identified that will guide the Initiative's efforts: achieve better outcomes, create a better experience, and reduce costs and increase efficiencies. Additionally, the Initiative seeks to enable families to move out of poverty through 8 key drivers: jobs, education and skills training, housing, transportation, childcare, safe neighborhoods, judicial and health and nutrition.

The Initiative's work is being supported by the [Rochester Anti-Poverty Task Force](#), appointed by Governor Andrew Cuomo, which consists of over 20 members of the Governor's Cabinet. The Task Force is working in partnership with the Initiative to help leverage State resources.

To learn more about the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, please visit www.endingpovertynow.org.

About United Way of Greater Rochester

United Way of Greater Rochester's mission is to magnify and focus the power of community resources to address our most pressing social needs. United Way is a four-star rated Charity Navigator charity and a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity. Please visit us online at www.uwrochester.org.