



December 12, 2023

N.Y. Senator Rachel May, Chair
Standing Committee on Cities 2
Legislative Office Building, Suite 803
198 State St.
Albany, N.Y. 12247

Dear Senator May and members of the Standing Committee on Cities 2:

Thank you for your thoughtful examination into the causes and effects of poverty in New York's small- and medium-sized cities.

Concentrated poverty in Rochester is the result of historic racism, particularly legal housing segregation and widespread employment discrimination. As a result, poverty today is Rochester's single greatest challenge and a leading contributor to our greatest problems. These include crime, reduced educational achievement, inadequate job opportunities, and poor health outcomes. Perversely, these problems continue to disproportionately impact people of color, the original targets of the historic racism that caused the poverty to begin with.

Rochester is home to three of New York State's top five poorest zip codes, all of which have the city's highest concentrations of minority residency, along with our highest concentrations of poverty and its associated challenges. Not coincidentally, these same neighborhoods closely align with the boundaries of the city areas categorized as Red (hazardous) or Yellow (definitely declining) on the Depression-era Homeowners Lending Corporation (HOLC) map of Rochester – the historic source of the term “redlining.”

Considering the historic relationship between legalized racism and poverty; and the disproportionate impact of the effects of poverty on people of color in New York's small- and medium-sized cities, it is incumbent upon the New York State Legislature to enact policies that will reduce poverty and end these cycles of tragedy.

Three legislative proposals that would greatly enhance our efforts to reduce poverty in Rochester are: An equitable increase in our share of Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) aid; funding to support our efforts to fully eliminate lead pipes in and around city homes; and increased investment in transformational capital projects such as ROC the Riverway, the Inner Loop North and High Falls State Park.

Thank you again for taking on this critically important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Malik D. Evans', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Malik D. Evans
Mayor