



**Rochester Mayor Lovely A. Warren: Testimony to the Joint Committee on
Public Health, |New York State Senate and Assembly**

October 10, 2019

Good morning. I am Mayor Lovely Ann Warren, and I am honored to welcome you to Rochester and thank you for holding this important hearing in our city.

I also want to thank Senator Rivera and Assemblymember Gottfried, and all the members of this esteemed committee, for allowing me this opportunity to testify on the importance of universal health care.

The citizens of Rochester are rightfully proud of our city's legacy as the home and final resting place of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony.

Rochester is the cradle of human rights as we know them today in America ...

And that distinction is especially relevant now as we talk about health care – another human right that is being denied to far too many of our citizens.

This is why Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman."

Let me tell you a little bit about why health care is so important to me on a personal level.

When I was in college, I was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disorder.

I was away from home for the first time in my life, and the symptoms of my illness were stumping the health-care providers at my school's medical center.

I wasn't just another student with a case of mono or the flu.

Nobody could tell me what was wrong or why I wasn't getting better – until I ended up in the emergency room.

I could see my life-long dream of becoming an attorney start to slip from my grasp.

I remember begging a nurse: "Please tell me you can fix this. Please tell me I will get better so I won't have to drop out of school."

I was scared and alone. All I wanted was the remedy of my mother's home cooking and her loving care.



**Rochester Mayor Lovely A. Warren: Testimony to the Joint Committee on
Public Health, |New York State Senate and Assembly**

Instead, I had to rely on the health-care system in another city. I couldn't even go to my own doctor.

It was a trial by fire to say the least.

Thankfully, I had the means and support systems in place to navigate the health-care system and stay on track at school.

I got the care that I needed. I got better and I graduated on time.

But I will never forget how close I came to losing my dream of becoming an attorney.

Because of that experience, I will never take my health for granted.

And as the Mayor of Rochester, I recognize that government leaders cannot take the health of their constituents for granted, either.

I often say that the things I want for the people of Rochester are the same things that I want for my own family.

These include the best possible school for my daughter;

A home that fits into our budget in a neighborhood where we feel safe;

and careers that help us reach our full, God-given potential.

This is why my Administration is focused on three primary goals: creating more jobs, safer and more vibrant neighborhoods and better educational opportunities for our citizens.

Universal health care is a key that unlocks the door to every one of these goals.

Despite our city's proud history of human and civil rights, Rochester struggles with one of the nation's highest rates of poverty – especially childhood poverty.

One out of every three residents, and more than half of our children, live in poverty.

The link between poverty and poor health is irrefutable.

Poverty and a lack of health care perpetuate an endless cycle of tragedy. As elected leaders, we must do everything in our power to break that cycle.

My own experience with the health-care system showed me how it can happen.

I was brought to the threshold by a life-changing, catastrophic illness.

It was only by the Grace of God that I was not pulled across that threshold.

I am an accomplished woman, but I know what it's like to feel helpless.

I will never forget that feeling – that fear of losing everything you have worked for through no fault of your own.

-page 3 of 3-

**Rochester Mayor Lovely A. Warren: Testimony to the Joint Committee on
Public Health, |New York State Senate and Assembly**

And as God as my witness, I will do everything in my power to make sure that every person in my care – whether it be my family; my friends; or my constituents – has the power to stay on this side of that threshold.

The right to universal health care is more than the right to good health. It is the right to take control of your own life.

The right to universal health care is more than the right to good health. It is the right to take control of your own life.

The State of New York must do everything in its power to provide this right to its residents.

Thank you.