

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, December 19, 2019

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Nate Dougherty, Communication coordinator
Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative
(585) 749-2650
nathan.dougherty@uwrochester.org

U.S. Census Data Show Rochester Poverty Rate, Child Poverty Rate Decreases **- City, anti-poverty partners announce 'ROC Your Refund' economic mobility program -**

Rochester, NY – New data released by the U.S. Census Bureau for the most recent five-year period indicates a decrease in overall poverty rates and child poverty rates throughout the city of Rochester.

The data, from 2014 to 2018, shows the overall poverty rate dropped from 33.1 percent to 32.6 percent and also indicates that:

- Rochester's child poverty rate dropped from 51.9 percent to 51.0 percent;
- The city's rate of extreme poverty (below half the federal poverty line) increased from 16.05 percent to 16.19 percent;
- Compared to this time last year, there are close to 1,450 fewer people living in poverty, including 1,200 children; and
- Rochester remains 3rd in overall poverty among the nation's 75 largest metropolitan areas.

These statistics were compiled by the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative in partnership with the City of Rochester and ACT Rochester based on information gathered by the Census Bureau's five-year American Community Survey. This survey uses a larger sample size, making it the most comprehensive and reliable measure of poverty.

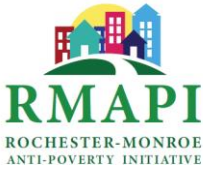
Because the U.S. Census data is compiled based on a five-year average, this is the first year where a majority of data reflects the work done by RMAP. The community collaborative was convened in early 2015 and spent months assessing the root causes of poverty and what changes would be needed to bring lasting poverty reduction. The first implementation strategies began in 2016.

Using data from this latest survey, we updated the list of the 10 poorest cities among the top 75 metropolitan areas in the United States. Rochester ranked third this year behind Detroit and Cleveland.

"These results are an encouraging sign that our community is moving in the right direction," says Dr. Leonard Brock, executive director of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. "When RMAP first convened nearly five years ago, we came together as a community and committed to making systemic changes that would bring meaningful, long-term reductions in poverty. We are greatly encouraged to see that since last year, more than 1,450 people have moved out of poverty, including 1,200 children. When IBM published a report on poverty in Rochester in 2015, they found that without significant changes, Rochester's poverty rate would only continue to rise. We have not only stopped that rate of growth, we are now starting to see reductions in poverty.

"While these results are a validation of that work, the rise in the rate of extreme poverty shows us that there is still much more work to be done and underscores the need for systemic changes to the system that has failed to address poverty, and in many cases perpetuated it. It is the greatest challenge our community has ever faced, but we are more confident than ever that we have the commitment and determination to reach our goals."

"Today's report on poverty in Rochester reminds us of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who said we must confront this evil condition with 'divine dissatisfaction,' " said Mayor Lovely A. Warren. "To that end, I am looking



forward to having a true community partner in the Office of the Monroe County Executive, who oversees the agencies that are best equipped to help our citizens achieve financial independence. This partnership, combined with the on-going work and new programs of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, brings the promise that belief will be made real for every citizen in our community as we work together to create more jobs, safer and more vibrant neighborhoods and better educational opportunities.”

Mayor Warren said the report strengthens her resolve to continue working with the City’s community partners to bring an end to poverty in Rochester. Warren noted that programs to reach this goal include building almost 1,000 affordable housing units and preserving hundreds more; the KIVA micro-lending program; closing the transportation gap through bikeshare, rideshare and vanpool; and the creation of financial empowerment centers to offer free financial counseling to city residents.

Warren added that in January, the City will join the CASH (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) program at the Empire Justice Center to launch ROC Your Refund, a new matched-savings pilot program to help working families leverage their annual federal and state income-tax refunds to achieve economic mobility.

Participants are provided free tax-filing services and a free savings account, into which their refunds—along with a match of up to 50 cents on every dollar—will be deposited over four quarterly installments, Warren said. Other services include personal financial counseling, financial-education workshops, peer-support groups and access to safe and affordable checking accounts.

The program is funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies’ What Works Cities program, the Rochester Area Community Foundation and the United Way of Greater Rochester.

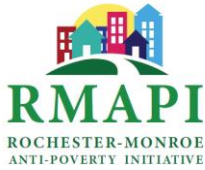
To learn more, visit www.CityofRochester.gov/ROCYourRefund/.

“Through these programs and partnerships we will bring true equality through economic empowerment to Rochester,” Mayor Warren said. “As Dr. King implored: Let us be dissatisfied together until every man, woman and child in our community has the financial means to reach their full, God-given potential.”

The 10 Poorest Cities Among Top 75 U.S. Metropolitan Areas		
Rank By Poverty Rate	City	Poverty Rate
1	Detroit, MI	36.4%
2	Cleveland, OH	34.6%
3	Rochester, NY	32.6%
4	Dayton, OH	32.1%
5	Buffalo, NY	30.3%
6	Hartford, CT	30.1%
7	Cincinnati, OH	27.2%
8	Birmingham, AL	27.2%
9	Fresno, CA	26.9%
10	Memphis, TN	26.8%

To put Rochester’s poverty rate further into context, we have annually compared it to poverty rates of 17 other principal cities in similar-sized metropolitan areas (those within 200,000 of Rochester’s total population). This benchmark group includes Buffalo, Hartford, Conn.; Richmond, Va.; Birmingham, Ala.; Tulsa, Okla.; and Louisville, Ky.

Among this benchmark group, the Census data found that Rochester ranks first in overall poverty, childhood poverty, and extreme poverty.



Poverty Rates Among Rochester's Benchmark Cities				
	City	Poverty Rate: Overall	Poverty Rate: Under 18	Extreme Poverty Rate
1	Rochester, NY	32.6%	51.0%	16.2%
2	Buffalo, NY	30.3%	45.9%	15.1%
3	Hartford, CT	30.1%	40.4%	13.6%
4	Birmingham, AL	27.2%	44.0%	12.0%
5	Fresno, CA	26.9%	37.7%	12.4%
6	New Orleans, LA	24.6%	36.6%	12.3%
7	Richmond, VA	24.5%	40.1%	13.6%
8	Tucson, AZ	23.4%	31.4%	10.7%
9	Bridgeport, CT	21.4%	30.4%	10.5%
10	Grand Rapids, MI	21.2%	29.7%	9.6%
11	Worcester, MA	21.1%	29.4%	10.7%
12	Tulsa, OK	19.7%	30.4%	9.0%
13	Salt Lake City, UT	17.9%	22.5%	8.8%
14	Albuquerque, NM	17.6%	24.7%	7.9%
15	Oklahoma City, OK	16.8%	25.2%	7.0%
16	Louisville, KY	16.6%	25.0%	7.3%
17	Raleigh, NC	13.7%	19.4%	6.2%
Principal cities in all metro areas within 200,000 population (+/-) of Rochester				

“It has been six years since ACT Rochester and Rochester Area Community Foundation launched the first of three powerful poverty reports. While awareness about poverty throughout our region has grown significantly, making real change will take a concerted effort by many to focus on and invest in projects that can deliver measurable results,” says Ann Johnson, executive director of ACT Rochester.

As a Collective Impact coalition, RMAPI is organizing partners to collaborate in ways never experienced here before, coordinating and aligning institutions around common priorities, policies, practices, and shared measures. This will allow for an integrated system that achieves visible progress at the individual and community levels.

In order to create the greatest opportunity for poverty reduction, RMAPI has focused on two critical areas—increasing the affordability and accessibility of basic needs, and improving workforce development.

For more details on the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative, visit www.endingpovertynow.org.

For more details on the earlier poverty reports, visit <http://www.racf.org/Reports> or <http://www.ACTRochester.org/Poverty>.