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RMAPI Announces Policy Agenda For 2024

- Priorities including housing, income, criminalization and exploitation, child care, and mental health care—

Rochester, NY— The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) has developed a list of policy priorities for 2024 aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty by shifting power to enable upward mobility for all families. Our decisions and actions center on those who have been historically disadvantaged by racism, trauma, and community disinvestment.

These policy priorities were developed by RMAPI's Policy Working Group after significant input from local experts, community and government leaders, representatives from non-profit agencies, subject matter experts, and people directly impacted by poverty. Our 2024 priorities build on RMAPI's ongoing community engagement efforts and regular inclusion of community members with the lived/living experience of poverty in all of our work.

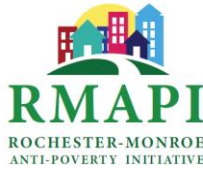
Since its inception, RMAPI has worked closely with community members and stakeholders to advocate for policies that address inequities, end efforts to criminalize poverty and support upward mobility for all members of our community. We have successfully advocated for a number of local and statewide policies that create systemic change and promote upward mobility, including some important developments in 2023.

On January 1, the minimum wage in Upstate New York rose to \$15 per hour. RMAPI long advocated for minimum wage increases, and while there is still more work before we reach a living wage, this is an important step toward upward mobility.

Gov. Kathy Hochul also signed the Clean Slate Act into law in 2023, automatically sealing certain criminal records to give more New Yorkers a second chance to contribute to their communities. The Clean Slate Act will reduce systemic barriers to full participation in our communities and take a significant step toward RMAPI's Guiding Principle to center racial equity. RMAPI worked closely with local and state partners to push for the passage of the Clean Slate Act, and joined Gov. Hochul in Brooklyn for its signing in November 2023.

"RMAPI's work is proof that when we think about the problem of poverty from all angles and levels, and when people from all sectors, backgrounds, and walks of life come together with a unified goal, a lot can change," said Aqua Y. Porter, RMAPI executive director. "Together, we can use our collective power to eradicate poverty and bring upward mobility to our community.

"RMAPI's extensive outreach to members of our community—including the most vulnerable and underserved—we see that their priorities are clear. We need to advocate for better access to safe and affordable housing, more flexible options for child care, sufficient income and support for individuals and families and an end to the exploitative financial practices that prey on people in poverty. And we must address



these issues by advocating for systems change solutions, transformative approaches that span institutions, focus on everything from policies to organizational culture, alter how our society operates, and shift both cultural values and political will.”

RMAPI’s policy priorities for 2024 include:

Policy Priority 1: Increase affordable housing options throughout Monroe County, with a focus on rental housing for low/very low income households and homeownership for low/moderate income homeowners.

- Construct and renovate rental housing at all price points and subsidize/incentivize new construction of deeply affordable rental housing and affordable starter homes for first-time homebuyers
- Eliminate exclusionary zoning policies/practices and create inclusionary policies
- Stabilize rent by limiting increases and preserving existing low-cost, quality rental housing
- Guarantee fair access to mortgages, credit, and funding for repairs for homebuyers of color in order to address the racial wealth gap and increase housing and neighborhood stability

Policy Priority 2: Ensure that households have sufficient income to meet their needs through living wages, gradual transitions off of public benefits, and opportunities for savings and wealth generation.

- Calculate public benefits based on inflation and a realistic cost of living
- Increase public funding for housing subsidies and vouchers
- Address rising food insecurity through increased SNAP benefits and universal school meals
- Strengthen tax credits for low-income families including the federal- and state-level child tax credits and the earned income tax credit
- Broaden access to Guaranteed Basic Income

Policy Priority 3: Eliminate penalties, fees/fines, and financial practices which exploit low-income people and criminalize poverty.

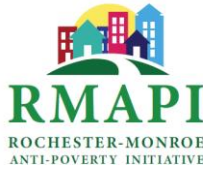
- Eliminate predatory fees and fines in the court, legal, and financial systems
- Support and prevent rollbacks to existing bail reform laws
- Eliminate excessive charges for everyday needs that exploit people living in poverty
- Enable public banking options to increase access and equity in the financial system

Policy Priority 4: Invest in more flexible and affordable child care and school-age care options for all families.

- Increase the capacity of the child care system to provide flexible options and care for those with non-traditional hours or schedules
- Support family caregivers providing child care by increasing compensation for this care and streamlining the process of becoming a legally exempt provider
- Increase funding for out-of-school time programs for school-age youth

Policy Priority 5: Increase access to culturally responsive and affordable mental and behavioral health services.

- Change licensure and insurance regulations to allow clinicians to serve patients in non-clinical settings, make it easier for providers to accept insurance, and reduce out-of-pocket costs for families



- Invest in the current and future mental health workforce through changes to education, training, and compensation that center racial equity
- Prioritize community-based solutions to mental health crises

Support for RMAPI Policy Agenda

N.Y. Assemblymember Harry Bronson

“As we in Rochester continue to work collaboratively in our commitment to building up this community, RMAPI is doing the important work of elevating the voices of those experiencing poverty to advocate for meaningful policy changes that constructively address systemic inequities. RMAPI’s 2024 Policy Agenda outlines the urgent need to increase affordable, safe housing options, invest in childcare and family supports, and most importantly, decriminalize poverty. These initiatives are critical to uplifting marginalized communities and represent a robust, achievable framework for transforming first-hand lived experiences into a path forward so that all families and individuals in Rochester have dignity, equity, justice and the opportunity to succeed. I am proud to partner with RMAPI through my work as a state legislator.”

N.Y. Assemblymember Josh Jensen

“It is important to have sustained conversations on improving our community. I am committed to continuing collaborative efforts, respectful dialogue and working towards tackling persistent issues facing Rochester and all of Monroe County.”

N.Y. Assemblymember Jennifer Lunsford

"The RMAPI Policy Agenda aims to create systemic changes that will generate generational impacts for our families living in poverty. From raising wages to investing in families, this agenda prioritizes dismantling systems that keep people in poverty and providing necessary supports to uplift our families. I'm proud to join with my elected colleagues and leaders from throughout the community to advance this people-centered agenda. I will continue to lend my voice to these priorities in Albany to secure the needed funding to meet these critical goals."

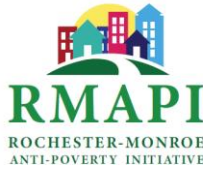
N.Y. Assemblymember Sarah Clark

“The 2024 RMAPI Policy Agenda demonstrates their continued dedication to fighting poverty throughout our community. Addressing the complex issue of poverty requires innovative solutions and input from community organizations and individuals with lived experience. Bringing these voices together remains critically important as we look to make meaningful investment and advocate for new policies at all levels of government to help ensure sustainable wages, affordable housing, and access to quality health and mental health care.”

N.Y. Assemblymember Demond Meeks

“Three of the poorest zip codes in New York State are located in Rochester alone. To begin to uplift our families and neighbors, we need to decriminalize poverty and establish policies that support disenfranchised members of our community. By implementing RMAPIS policy priorities, we can begin to break the cycle of poverty and build generational wealth. These things can only be accomplished by combining community leadership with bold government action. We must invest continuously in Rochester's people if we want to see lasting change.”

N.Y. State Senator Jeremy Cooney



“The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative is at the forefront of critical and long-overdue work happening in Rochester. It has always been a priority of mine to pass legislation that improves the lives of families in Rochester. I appreciate having partner organizations like RMAPI to help my partners in government and I better understand and prioritize what is needed to move the dial on poverty reduction. Thank you for your insight and dedication.”

N.Y. State Senator Samra Brouk

“RMAPI is a collaborative leader in championing policy to combat the root causes of poverty—both locally and statewide. The items outlined in their 2024 Policy Agenda underscore the importance of addressing housing, mental health, childcare, and more as solutions to the deep seated poverty that exists in our community. As Chair of the Senate Mental Health Committee and as a member of the Cities 2 and Children and Families Committees, I’m proud of the work we have done so far to support working families—like increasing the minimum wage, expanding access to doula care, and bringing record investments into our schools and broader community. I look forward to continued partnership with my colleagues in the legislature, local government, and leadership at RMAPI to ensure that we do everything in our power to bring real investments into our region.”

About RMAPI

RMAPI is a multi-sector community collaborative whose aim is to **break the cycle of poverty by shifting power to enable upward mobility for individuals and families.**

RMAPI has developed three guiding principles to inform its work and serve as a guide for community decision-making: **center racial equity, address collective trauma and revitalize neighborhoods.**

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