



# TESTIMONY

*Mayor Malik D. Evans*

*Rochester, New York*

Joint Legislative Hearings

2022-23 New York State  
Executive Budget Proposal

*February 9, 2022*

*Good afternoon Chairwoman Kreuger and Chairwoman Weinstein, members of the Ways and Means and Finance Committees; and other members of the Senate and Assembly. I am Mayor Malik Evans and I am honored to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents, business owners and all of Rochester's stakeholders.*

**As you know, I am the newly elected Mayor of Rochester, and when I look around, I see a lot of things that are new or almost new.** We are all living in a time of tremendous change; a time of tremendous challenge; and a time of tremendous opportunity. But I like to choose the word "new" to describe all of that because it inspires hope and optimism. We all love a new day. And I am certainly relishing my new day as Mayor of Rochester. And despite the incredible, and very tragic challenges we are facing related to the twin pandemics of the Coronavirus and unprecedented violent crime, we must never forget that it's a new day for Rochester and New York State.

**New York has a new governor, America has an almost new president; and Monroe County has an almost new County Executive.** The New York State Legislature has a host of almost new members and an almost new Leadership team, with a new mandate to bring much-needed transformation to our State. And they have an unprecedented level of resources to deliver opportunities that are so new that we could barely imagine them just a year ago.

**But we're also filled with more than a little trepidation** – because new opportunities also carry risk, and the pressure to get them right. We have to get them right the first time, because we likely won't get these opportunities again.

**And that risk and pressure are very real.** I've been on the job for just over a month, but on my very first day in office, I found myself talking to a mother because her 14-year-old child – her 14-year-old baby – was shot down in cold blood while walking to the store to buy noodles. These tragedies and so many others like it do not have to happen. They do not have to be inevitable. But they will keep happening – again and again and again. They will keep happening if we don't seize the opportunities we have before us now.

**I am the son of a preacher, so hope and optimism come easy for me.** So does gratitude. And I am filled with all of those as I make the deliberate choice to focus on the new day for Rochester and all of New York.



Mayor Malik D. Evans  
City of Rochester, NY

I am grateful for the support Rochester has received from the state, particularly for our ROC the Riverway initiative.

And I thank Governor Hochul for her support through RECAP, the Regional Economic Community Assistance Program, which will leverage additional private funding to make strategic investments in workforce development, waterfront, small business, commercial corridors, innovation, and capacity building for Rochester. These funds will allow us to make additional progress with ROC the Riverway, which includes exciting plans to create a Rochester High Falls



State Park, revitalize the former Riverside Hotel, update the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center, and renovate the High Falls Visitor Center.

**These projects are critical to the revitalization of our waterfront and our Downtown.**

“ROC the Riverway” is a product of our strong state and local partnership that not only improves the quality of life of our residents, but also elevates Rochester’s potential as an economic engine for the entire state. As a result, our city is a more attractive destination for tourists and employers – especially those in the growing knowledge economy, whose workers covet a strong work-life balance with ready access to natural resources like the Genesee River.

**There are many things to get excited about in the Executive Budget:** funding for infrastructure through the BRIDGE-NY, PAVE NY, Consolidated Highway Improvement or CHIPS and Pave our Potholes Programs; economic development investments, including the RECAP program I mentioned earlier; numerous investments in public safety initiatives, including the Gun Involved Violence Elimination or GIVE program, the SNUG outreach program, the Community Stabilization Units partnership, capital for communities to combat gun violence, and funding for community empowerment and crime-reduction programming for areas victimized by gun violence.



**In addition, I greatly appreciate the Governor’s dedication of funding to housing** to create and preserve affordable homes,

support the operation of shelters and supportive housing units, and provide rental subsidies. And her promise to further strengthen neighborhoods through the Restore NY program will combat blight by supporting efforts to address vacant and abandoned properties.

**And I applaud the governor’s commitment to educate our children** through an increase to school aid. Our children are our future, and we must invest in them.

I am here today to ask you to support these initiatives in the Executive Budget. And I also ask for three more things:

- 1. An increase to AIM aid,**
- 2. Money to get the lead out of our water system, and**
- 3. Legislation to make our Persons In Crisis (PIC) team Medicaid eligible so that we can sustain this alternative response model.**

**Regarding AIM aid, Rochester had this funding reduced to its current level of \$88.2 million in 2012, where it has remained ever since.** In that time, Rochester's concentrations of poverty – a blight not just on Rochester but the entire state – remain shamefully high. These numbers are especially reprehensible because they are the underlying cause of the 81 homicides our city experienced last year. It is incumbent upon every New York lawmaker to help reverse this trend, whether they represent our city or not, by eliminating the disparity in our AIM formula.



**The state is forecasting surpluses in the billions in its current year and in the next four fiscal years.** Rochester continues to forecast significant out-year gaps. The state is clearly in a position to help cities and increase funding for AIM aid. I implore you to do so. Rochester continues to have a much higher Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and much lower per capita Aid and Incentives to Municipalities than Buffalo and Syracuse. Because of the State's MOE requirement, more than 63% of our tax levy goes to the school district.

**It is time to take a new and more equitable approach to AIM aid.** Increasing AIM aid to Rochester so it covers the current MOE mandate would provide an additional \$31 million annually and would help us deal with higher costs resulting from inflation and supply chain issues and significantly reduce our projected gaps.



**Because of the State's MOE requirement, more than 63% of our tax levy goes to the school district.**

**Secondly, Rochester has made great strides in reducing lead poisoning in children through programs that remediated lead paint in homes.** Now it's time to get the lead out of our water system. Increased federal regulation will require it, but federal funding will fall far short of the estimated \$200 million it will take to eliminate lead pipes. This is a burden that a city with one of the highest child poverty rates in the country cannot bear alone. Rochester started to remove these pipes years ago, but without exhausting all of our ARPA funds, which are needed to help us recover from the pandemic, we simply don't have the resources to do it in a reasonable time frame. New York State is fortunate to be in a position to help, so I am asking – please help us. A commitment of \$125 million will address the shortfall we anticipate after federal infrastructure funding and City ARPA investments are exhausted.



**And finally, I ask that the state pass legislation that will make our Persons In Crisis (PIC) team eligible for reimbursement through Medicaid.** Arising out of the Daniel Prude tragedy, the PIC team was developed to respond to mental health calls as an alternative to police response. Its aims are to divert non-violent 911 crisis calls towards a mental health or social service-focused response, de-escalate crisis calls, connect service users to appropriate community resources, and provide referrals and supports to stabilize service users and prevent future crises. The service is available 24/7 across the City of Rochester to provide rapid mobile response to individuals in crisis. We need a funding stream to make this critical service sustainable.



*In closing, I again thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the people of Rochester. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.*


 For more information, contact  
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