



Written Testimony submitted by
The University of Rochester and
the Mt. Hope Family Center
to the
Senate Finance Committee
and the Assembly Ways & Means Committee
Human Services FY 2027 Executive Budget
February 5, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the human services section of the FY 2027 Executive Budget. I am writing to respectfully and urgently request \$250,000 in direct operating support for Mt. Hope Family Center (MHFC), an organization that for more than four decades has stood at the front lines of protecting children and strengthening families in our community.

For over 45 years, Mt. Hope Family Center has delivered evidence-based prevention, intervention, and clinical services that reduce the devastating and lifelong impacts of childhood trauma and maltreatment. MHFC's work is grounded in the understanding that early adversity does not just affect childhood—it shapes health, educational achievement, economic stability, and well-being across the lifespan. By integrating direct services with nationally recognized research, MHFC ensures that children and families receive care that is not only compassionate, but proven to work.

The need for this work has never been more urgent. Nationally, one in seven children experiences abuse or neglect. In Rochester, that reality is even more severe—rates of child maltreatment are two and a half times the national average. Nearly half of Rochester's children live in poverty, infant mortality rates are four times the national rate, and teen birth rates far exceed state and national levels. These are not abstract statistics; they represent children at risk of lifelong harm without timely, effective intervention.

MHFC plays a uniquely critical role in addressing this crisis. MHFC is home to the TRANSFORM Center, one of only three NIH-designated National Centers for Child Abuse and Neglect in the country—and the only one in New York State. Each year, MHFC serves more than 2,000 children and families through prevention, treatment, and clinical services, while also advancing best practices that shape child welfare systems nationwide. The impact of this work extends far beyond individual families, strengthening communities and reducing long-term public costs associated with untreated trauma.

Despite this impact, the demand for comprehensive, evidence-based family services continues to grow. Families are seeking help in greater numbers, and without additional support, too many children may go without the care they urgently need. Direct state funding will allow Mt. Hope Family Center to respond to this rising demand, protect more children from harm, and interrupt cycles of trauma before they become entrenched.

Specifically, this investment would allow MHFC to hire additional highly trained clinicians, enabling the Center to serve 90 additional families each year. It would also support the implementation of after-school and summer youth programming for 450 additional at-risk children annually—providing safe, supportive environments during the hours when children are most vulnerable and opportunities for healing, growth, and resilience.

A \$250,000 investment in Mt. Hope Family Center is an investment in children’s safety, family stability, and the long-term health of our community. We respectfully urge your support of this critical funding request and thank you for your leadership and commitment to New York’s children and families. Thank you for your consideration.