



Assemblyman Demond Meeks was one of many speakers in support of a series of recommendations from the state's Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council that would help reduce child poverty in the Rochester area and across the state. JUSTICE MARBURY/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

Rochester groups join push to reduce child poverty rate

Plans call for vouchers, tax credit increases

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
USA TODAY NETWORK

Eighteen percent of Rochester's kids live in poverty. Local leaders want to change that.

A delegation of local elected officials, including Assemblyman Demond Meeks, Senator Samra Brouk, and Rochester City Council President Miguel Melendez, and organizations, such as The Children's Agenda and Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RAMPI), are pledging their support for a series of recommendations from the state's Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC) that would help reduce child poverty in Rochester area and across the state.

The Child Poverty Reduction Act was legislation initially proposed by Assemblyman Harry Bronson and signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul.

The act declared child poverty a significant problem and a policy priority in the state, creating CPRAC.

"In New York State, 18% of children experience poverty. But in Rochester, the rate is more than double that at more than 40%," said Aqua Porter, the Executive Director of RAMPI.

"Forty percent of our children who live at or below the poverty line," said Aqua Porter, Executive Director of RAMPI. "Every year a child spends in poverty is dangerous and expensive. The toxic stress of early poverty stunts children's development, creating opportunity gaps that can last a lifetime."

CPRAC aims to reduce child poverty in New York by 50% within 10 years by recommending actionable policies to the governor and legislature. Progress will be tracked and reported along the way.

Child poverty in Rochester

In New York State, child poverty affects nearly 30% of children of color, with Black children more than twice as likely to live in poverty compared to their non-Hispanic white peers.

Children who face poverty have lifelong consequences on their health, education, and quality of life.

According to RAMPI, children living in poverty are 17% more likely to have asthma, twice as likely to be hospitalized, and 2.5 times more likely to have toxic lead in their blood.

Solutions to child poverty in Rochester

The Children's Agenda and RAMPI believe expanding on already proven effective solutions, such as safety net programs and tax credits, will give children

the stability they need to thrive.

Their final recommendations include:

- Increase the Empire State Child Credit to \$1,500 for children from birth to age 17
- Create a NYS Housing Voucher program for income-eligible households
- Increase public assistance basic allowance
- Reforms to public assistance eligibility rules to increase accessibility
- Expand state food benefits for families with children

"We know that we have the right people in the right places to continue this fight and to be successful," Senator Samra Brouk said. "And the key here is that we do not seek success to say that we won, to say that we've succeeded. We seek success because our children are suffering every single day that we fail them."

— As a Rochester native, Justice Marbury entered the world of journalism to create work where voices like hers were heard — the voices of minority communities. Marbury covers small businesses, neighborhood concerns, and the interesting people who live in Rochester's 19th Ward. As the 19th Ward reporter, she has helped implement community outreach ideas by asking what people in various communities want to read about themselves in addition to regular news. Contact her on Instagram @justice_marbury and by email at jmarbury@gannett.com.