



Monroe County Legislature

RACHEL BARNHART
LEGISLATOR – DISTRICT 21

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August 17, 2023

Hon. Adam Bello
Monroe County Executive
39 W. Main St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14614

Dear County Executive Bello,

I am writing this letter to express concern and ask questions about your use of a security detail that employs at least one Monroe County Sheriff's deputy. At a time when our community faces many challenges, it's important that we direct resources where they are most needed. Therefore, I have the following questions:

1. What safety concerns prompted the need for a security detail?
2. How many personnel are assigned to the security detail, and what are their job titles and salaries?
3. What are the hours and days of the security detail?
 1. Is this intended to be a 24-7 detail?
4. Your administration has informed me that Jason Elliotto, who retired from the Sheriff's Department and is now working part-time, is "creating a security detail" for you as part of his job responsibilities.
 1. Dep. Elliotto has already been seen driving you to events.
 1. Does he have a take-home car?
 2. If he is not working, do other deputies fill in?
 3. Is he armed?
5. What is the annual budget for this security detail?
 1. Did the funds for the security detail come out of the \$7.3 million recently approved by the Monroe County Legislature to add personnel to the Sheriff's Office?
6. What safeguards in place to ensure the security detail will not be driving you to campaign events?

I am skeptical of the need for a regular security detail. When I was a reporter, I covered numerous mayors and county executives who drove themselves to events. Sometimes, a group of staffers would pile in a car to go to events together. Mayor Lovely Warren was the first to employ a driver but used civilians for the job. I am now an elected official – a woman who is no stranger to harassment and threats – and I drive, walk, or take the bus to meetings and events on my own.

I encourage you to rethink using a security detail, particularly one that is made up of sworn law enforcement officers. To put it bluntly: you are asking for trouble. (Just ask Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz and former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio about the controversies surrounding their use of uniformed officers for security.) It is very difficult for a county executive during a busy reelection campaign to separate politics from official duties, which raises ethical questions about the use of law enforcement for security.

Further, our Child Protective Service workers have told us they have been assaulted on the job, and the Sheriff's Office is frequently sounding the alarm about public safety. We also desperately need to fund more housing-related initiatives. It's simply hard to justify using these resources for your security detail.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Barnhart".

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 21