



Monroe County Legislature

RACHEL BARNHART
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November 16, 2023

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

Dear County Executive Bello,

The purpose of this letter is to express concern over the length of time it is taking to process SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and Temporary Assistance (cash) applications. Data shows the county is not meeting its legal obligations in thousands of cases.

After getting numerous complaints from community members about this issue, I asked for information. Here is a timeline on my efforts to date:

- **September 8:** I sent an email to your administration asking for information on wait times for applicants to SNAP.
- **September 18:** The County sent me an emailed response that did not include an answer or any data.
- **September 18:** I filed an open records request with the County for benefits processing information for Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Emergency Housing and Medicaid.
- **October 17:** The County informed me it needed until November 15 to complete the records request.
- **November 15:** The County informed me it needs until December 14 to complete the records request.

Ironically, the same day the County told me it needed more time, New York State responded to my open records request with the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) with a spreadsheet of processing times in Monroe County for SNAP and Temporary Assistance (TA) going back to 2020.

The data from OTDA shows a consistent problem in Monroe County processing applications on time. **Throughout this past year, the County has been processing *only about half of SNAP (49%) and TA (52%) applications within the 30 days required by law.***

SNAP

Month	Number Disposed	>30 Days	>60 days	>90 days	% Processed within 30 days
1/2023	4,351	2,272	400	62	37%
2/2023	3,647	1,618	234	33	48%
3/2023	4,321	1,997	383	27	44%
4/2023	3,679	1,802	658	31	32%
5/2023	4,113	1,953	229	38	46%
6/2023	4,125	1,639	99	27	57%
7/2023	3,880	1,375	103	30	61%
8/2023	4,356	1,579	133	32	60%
9/2023	3,733	1,541	120	44	54%
	36,205	15,776	2,359	324	49%

Temporary Assistance

Month	Number Disposed	>30 Days	>60 days	>90 days	% Processed within 30 days
1/2023	2,626	1,339	362	63	33%
2/2023	2,376	1,094	214	51	43%
3/2023	2,853	1,231	182	45	49%
4/2023	2,228	741	150	37	58%
5/2023	2,645	828	138	48	62%
6/2023	2,377	747	79	34	64%
7/2023	2,423	856	114	33	59%
8/2023	2,845	987	190	31	58%
9/2023	2,771	1,256	188	47	46%
	23,144	9,079	1,617	389	52%

The data is clear. **The County is consistently not meeting its obligation to the community, risking the health and wellbeing of Monroe County residents.** People who need help obtaining food and meeting other basic needs should not have to wait weeks for assistance. They deserve to be treated with care and dignity – and putting them through this kind of uncertainty and stress is cruel.

The hardworking people in the Department of Human Services are not to blame for this situation. In August, the Federation of Social Workers asked the Legislature to use excess safety net funds for overtime so workers could catch up with benefits applications. Instead, you successfully urged legislators to transfer the \$1.9 million to parks, the zoo and golf courses.

The 2024 budget is an opportunity to put a corrective plan in place. While the budget proposal appears to add examiner positions, it's not clear if this will be an adequate investment. A budget is a statement of priorities, and Monroe County has the resources to do better.

Sincerely,

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

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 21