



Monroe County Legislature

RACHEL BARNHART
LEGISLATOR – DISTRICT 17

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Adam Bello
Monroe County Executive
110 County Office Building
39 W. Main St., Rochester, NY 14614

January 2, 2025

Dear County Executive Bello,

I am writing to formally request a copy of the plan submitted to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) for the allocation of \$25 million in anti-poverty funds designated for Monroe County in the 2024-2025 state budget.

At the Monroe County Legislature's Ways and Means Committee meeting on December 5, Chief Financial Officer Robert Franklin stated that Monroe County would receive these funds, intended to be spent in the City of Rochester. He also indicated that the Department of Human Services Commissioner would issue agency contracts without requiring approval from the County Legislature.¹ Both the County and City have referenced collaboration on a spending plan, with Mr. Franklin referring to "the plan" as if it already exists.

While the state budget requires only that the Commissioner consult with the mayor before submitting the plan to OTDA, it unfortunately does not mandate public or local legislative involvement in the process.² If the plan has not yet been submitted, I strongly urge you to seek input from both the Legislature and the community before finalizing it. Meaningful participation is essential to ensuring the spending plan aligns with the needs and priorities of the residents it is intended to serve.

I am deeply concerned about Monroe County's interpretation of state regulations that appear to sideline the County Legislature's role in overseeing and approving social services contracts. Regardless, both the Legislature and the public have a right to review this anti-poverty plan to ensure transparency and accountability in how these critical funds are spent.

It is disappointing that community and legislative input have not been sought to date. However, we now have an opportunity to move forward with greater transparency. I urge you to follow the

¹ Discussion on the grant begins at 59:00. Link is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67WHPRNXmI0&t=6478s>

² Pages 696-697 of PDF of enacted budget bill: <https://nyassembly.gov/2024budget/bills2024/enacted/A8803d.pdf>

example of Onondaga County, which received its own allotment of anti-poverty funds,³⁴ and share the spending plan with the Legislature and the public without delay.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

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

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 17

³ The Onondaga County Legislature was given an overview of how the funds would be spent when it voted to accept the grant. <http://ongov.net/legislature/documents/12.11.24HlthAgdapac.pdf>

⁴ The news media in Onondaga County was also informed about the anti-poverty spending plan: <https://www.syracuse.com/news/2024/07/onondaga-county-asks-to-spend-125m-in-poverty-money-on-housing-diapers-help-for-struggling-families.html>