

For Immediate Release: September 11, 2025

MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO, MAYOR MALIK EVANS ANNOUNCE INAUGURAL MEMBERS OF DEAF EQUITY COUNCIL

First meeting takes place today, Sept. 11

MONROE COUNTY, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and Mayor Malik Evans today introduced the inaugural members of the Monroe County/City of Rochester Deaf Equity Council. The Council, which was created earlier this year, held its first meeting today, Sept. 11. Its mission is to advise, advocate, and create systemic changes that lead to equitable quality of life for Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals in the City of Rochester and Monroe County.

“The Deaf Equity Council will help us use an equitable lens when shaping policy and initiatives in Monroe County,” **said County Executive Bello**. “The members who are being announced today bring a long list of experience in advocacy and innovation for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Community that will help shape a more inclusive future in our community.”

“Our significant Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community strengthens our region’s cultural vibrancy, economic vitality and social progress,” **said Mayor Evans**. “These neighbors’ civic participation in our community dates back at least to the founding of Rochester School for Deaf in 1876, offering almost 150 years of objective evidence that creating equitable access to opportunity offers the best path to equal opportunity and self-determination. I am honored to continue this tradition in partnership with County Executive Bello through the work of the Deaf Equity Council, and pleased to welcome these inaugural council members.”

The Deaf Equity Council will serve as a resource for, and advise Town, City, and County officials on policies and issues that are relevant and important to Deaf residents. The Council is comprised of 11 community members with lived experience being Deaf, DeafBlind, Hard of Hearing, or other Spectrum of Deafness in addition to three institutional members. The inaugural members of the Deaf Equity Council are:

- Bradley Bourgeois
- Andrew Cho
- Nicole Dugan
- Kari Hansen
- Nikolas Kelly
- Sarah Kinor
- Jennifer Lowden
- Yashaira Romilus
- Amy Stornello
- Dora Tin
- LeeAnne Valentine

The three institutional members are:

- Chris Campbell, Deaf Equity and Program Accessibility Director, University of Rochester;
- Charles McFadden, Executive Director, Pre-College Programs, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT); and
- Antony A.L. McLetchie, Superintendent/CEO of Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD)

“We are thrilled to formally announce the inaugural members of the Deaf Equity Council! Bringing together such a diverse group of leaders is a powerful step toward a more accessible and equitable Monroe County,” **said Davin Searls, Deaf Equity Council representative.** “This council is about more than representation – it’s about meaningful change for our community, and I’m excited to see the collaboration and innovation it will spark.”

The committee was formed after a long selection period during which members of the community were encouraged to reach out and get involved. The Council is expected to convene every two months to advise Town, City, and County officials on policies and issues relevant and of importance to Deaf residents.

For more information on the Council and members of the Deaf Equity Council, visit www.monroecounty.gov/dei-deafequitycouncil. Meetings of the Deaf Equity Council are closed to the public, but community members can reach out to deafequity@monroecounty.gov.

—30—

Media inquiries:

Steve Barz, Director of Communications
stevebarz@MonroeCounty.gov
(585) 753-1064

Molly Clifford, Deputy Director
mollyclifford@MonroeCounty.gov
(585) 233-3699