NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
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COUNTY EXECUTIVE BELLO PROPOSES INCREASING HOUSING ALLOWANCE TO HELP PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

Project Home seeks NYS approval for innovative solution that realigns funding, nearly doubling housing allowance to keep most vulnerable residents in stable homes

MONROE COUNTY, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today announced the submission of a proposal to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) for its review of the County's realignment of public assistance funds used for housing. If approved, Monroe County's Project Home will be able to nearly double housing allocations for residents closest to homelessness, making it easier for them to remain in their homes.

Each year, Monroe County allocates a mix of federal, state, and local funding to the Department of Human Services (DHS) in the County budget to help residents with housing needs. Working closely on the concept with NYS OTDA, DHS has redesigned how these funds are aligned, allowing the County to provide increased housing assistance- up to an amount equal to 60% of fair market rent to eligible households, which is nearly double what the current allocation is. This supplemental assistance will be available to the most vulnerable households at risk of imminent homelessness or have prolonged stays in emergency shelters.

"We're taking a new approach to how we use those dollars by targeting assistance to those who are most at risk of losing their homes," **said County Executive Adam Bello.** "Rather than relying solely on our traditional approach, we're using this funding more strategically to provide additional support when families need it most. It's a proactive and innovate investment in housing stability that will help hundreds of residents stay in their homes."

"Stable housing is the foundation for individuals and families to thrive, and we can no longer wait until someone is facing eviction or homelessness to step in. Shelter allowances must better reflect the realities of today's housing market. Supplementing these allowances is a necessary step toward closing the gap between what families can afford and the actual cost of maintaining a safe, stable home. I commend County Executive Bello, DHS leadership, and our community partners for understanding the need for this forward-thinking approach, that invests in prevention, and recognizes that supporting families before they reach another housing crisis strengthens our entire community," **said Monroe County Legislature President Yversha Roman.**

Ensuring housing stability across the county is a crucial part of Bello's priorities. Project Home puts the focus on residents who are most in need, providing an increased housing allowance to help stabilize their finances and maintain their existing housing or find new housing. Allowance amounts will vary pending the size of each household.

Eligible households must already be on public assistance and either be in immediate jeopardy of losing their homes or have prolonged shelter stays. Each case will be carefully reviewed by Department of Human Services staff and the additional housing allowance will remain available to eligible households for as long as they continue to receive public assistance. This initiative aligns with the Commission on Racial and Structural Equity (RASE) 2021 report.

"Creating long-term change requires addressing the roadblocks our families face to upward mobility, and housing instability is one of the most frequent barriers our community members identify. It requires rethinking how resources are allocated so that public investments are aligned with the realities of people's lives and the challenges they face.," **said Aqua Y. Porter, executive director of the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative.** "Through Project Home and the proposed Public Assistance Shelter Supplement Plan, Monroe County is taking an important step in that direction.
This is what meaningful systems change looks like — moving beyond short-term responses to crisis and making lasting investments that create greater opportunities for individuals and families to achieve stability and move forward."

"This is another major step toward making housing more affordable and stable for Monroe County residents who are most at risk of homelessness," **said Dr. Candice Lucas, Senior Vice President of Equity and Advocacy Division at the Urban League of Rochester.** "Grounded in the recommendations of the 2021 Commission on Racial and Structural Equity (RASE) report, this initiative addresses longstanding barriers to housing stability and responds to the calls of RASE members and community advocates who have championed changes in housing assistance. By directing resources to those most in need, Monroe County is taking a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and advancing housing equity."

"As Chair of the Human Services Committee, I know that stepping in before an eviction happens is far better for families and far more cost-effective for taxpayers than responding after a home is lost. By realigning up to $2.8 million in existing resources to raise housing allowances up to 60 percent of Fair Market Rent and adding a Safety Net supplement, Project Home is putting families first. This program will help more than 600 households across Rochester and Monroe County stay stably housed. I thank County Executive Bello, DHS leadership, and our community partners for implementing preventative policies," **said Monroe County Legislator Linda Hasman.**

"As a member of the Human Services Committee, I know the best outcomes happen when we help families before a challenge becomes a crisis. When families are worried about keeping a roof over their head, everything from staying healthy to helping children succeed in school becomes harder. By realigning up to $2.8 million in existing funding to raise shelter supplements up to 60 percent of Fair Market Rent and expanding support to

Safety Net households, Project Home will help more than 600 households across Monroe County maintain stable housing. I thank County Executive Bello and DHS for this smart, prevention-first approach and look forward to working with them to make it a reality," **said Monroe County Legislator Albert Blankley.**

"I believe good government means finding practical, compassionate solutions that support our neighbors while being responsible with taxpayer dollars. Project Home does just that. By redirecting up to $2.8 million in existing resources, we can increase housing assistance to 60 percent of Fair Market Rent without additional costs to taxpayers, helping more than 600 households remain in their homes. A temporary financial setback should not become a housing crisis. I applaud County Executive Bello and the Department of Human Services for putting families and prevention first," **said Legislator Lystra Bartholomew McCoy.**

"Every hardworking family in Monroe County—whether they live in the city or in towns like Chili—deserves the security of a safe, stable place to call home. By realigning up to $2.8 million in existing funding to raise housing allowances up to 60 percent of Fair Market Rent without increasing costs to taxpayers, Project Home helps residents weather a temporary financial setback before it leads to eviction. I commend County Executive Bello and DHS for making our resources work smarter to keep families housed," **Legislator Marvin Stepherson.**

"Success isn't just measured by how many people we help after they've lost their housing—it's measured by how many people we help never lose it in the first place. By realigning up to $2.8 million in existing funding we are shifting solutions from a temporary one to a permanent one. Project Home is a smart, fiscally responsible investment that will help more than 600 households across Monroe County. I thank County Executive Bello and the Department of Human Services staff for putting prevention first," **said Monroe County Legislator Susan Hughes-Smith.**

"Stable housing is violence prevention. I have seen firsthand how evictions destabilize families and neighborhoods, raising crime and leaving loved ones on the street. I appreciate the advocates who spent hundreds of hours volunteering their time to secure this small step in the right direction and the County Executive, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for collaborating with the state and community on the issue. We have to keep fighting until housing is guaranteed to all in ease, not begged for and demanded. We will see the day," **Monroe County Legislator Carolyn Delvecchio Hoffman.**

"As Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, I know it's important to make existing county dollars go further. Project Home does that by redirecting up to $2.8 million in existing funding to raise housing allowances to as much as 60 percent of Fair Market Rent, without burdening taxpayers. That support will help more than 600 households in Brighton, Pittsford, and across all of Monroe County stay in their homes by stepping in before a temporary setback leads to eviction. I thank County Executive Bello and the Department of Human Services for making eviction prevention a fiscally responsible priority," **said Monroe County Legislator Howard Maffucci.**

“A foundation of Economic Stability is having a safe, secure and stable place to call home. In Northwest Rochester, the rising costs of living can contribute to residents being at risk of eviction. Realigning up to 2.8 million in existing resources to raise housing allowances of the Fair Market Rent, Project Home will help over 600 households to stay housed and help build stronger neighborhoods. I thank County Executive Bello and DHS for their leadership moving Monroe County forward,” **said Monroe County Legislator Ricky Frazier.**

"Across Northeast Rochester and Irondequoit, hardworking families are doing everything they can to make ends meet, and a single unexpected setback shouldn't force them from their homes. By realigning up to $2.8 million in existing resources to raise shelter supplements up to 60 percent of Fair Market Rent and adding a Safety Net supplement, Project Home will help more than 600 households stay housed and keep children in their schools. I thank County Executive Bello, DHS, and our community partners for putting prevention first,” **said County Legislator Santos E. Cruz.**

The County can begin to offer the additional supplement in 2027, pending OTDA approval and the Legislature’s approval of the proposed 2027 County budget.

This initiative builds on Monroe County DHS's ongoing efforts to prevent homelessness, address housing instability and help residents avoid eviction before they need emergency shelter. Those efforts include:

- **Eviction Diversion Resource Center at the Monroe County Hall of Justice:** Since launching in 2024, the center has distributed more than $2 million in rental arrears assistance, helping residents resolve past-due rent and avoid eviction.
- **Project Anchor:** This local Rental Supplement Program (RSP), supported by a $3 million annual allocation from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), currently provides rental subsidies to approximately 210 families.
- **Shelter Arrears Eviction Forestallment (SAEF) Program:** Helps eligible individuals and families, with or without children, address rent or mortgage arrears and retain their permanent housing.

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