

# INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

*Why we must reverse chronic underfunding of the City of Rochester  
as a way to combat high rates of poverty and violence*

*Report compiled by the  
Office of NYS Senator Samra Brouk*



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## **The City of Rochester - Investing in Our Future**

### **Executive Summary**

**The safest communities in America are the ones with the greatest resources**, not the highest arrest rates and incarceration rates. Looking just at Monroe County, we see great disparity in crime and gun violence in the City of Rochester as compared to the suburban Town and Villages located adjacent to the city. What's the difference? Community resources – the investments and wealth of the municipalities, organizations and individuals in those communities. An important component of addressing safety in the City of Rochester is to consider a reversal of the state's historic policy of disinvestment in the City of Rochester.

New York's current revenue sharing system, the Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM), has been a cornerstone of municipal funding since its inception in 2006.<sup>1</sup> The largest receivers of this state aid are the Upstate "Big Four" Cities: Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse.<sup>2</sup> The AIM revenue sharing system has seen many changes since its introduction, however **a constant of the AIM system's structure is that one of these four cities is left underfunded in comparison to the rest. That city is Rochester.**

### **Background**

Rochester's 211,000 residents are facing a multitude of challenges.<sup>3</sup> Three of the state's five poorest zip codes are in the City of Rochester, and five are within the twenty poorest.<sup>4</sup> Gun Violence and Child Poverty are at the forefront of these challenges, but they are not the only issues the residents of this city face. Lacking the resources their comparative communities

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller, *Aid and Incentives for Municipalities: New York State's Local Revenue Sharing Program*, New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, February 2022, Page 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, Page 9.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2020. *QuickFacts Rochester City, New York*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rochestercitynewyork>

<sup>4</sup> Mayor Malik D. Evans, *Top 25 Poorest Zip Codes in New York*, via [zipdatamaps.com/economics/income/agi/state/poorest-zipcodes-in-new-york](http://zipdatamaps.com/economics/income/agi/state/poorest-zipcodes-in-new-york)

receive from the state, the people and city of Rochester see a downstream effect of systemic issues - including the aforementioned rise in gun violence and historically high child poverty rates, but also mental health issues and overall community well-being.<sup>5</sup>

The Gun Violence epidemic Rochester is experiencing is a multi-faceted policy failure that needs as many potential solutions as possible. Mayor Malik Evans has declared a state of emergency in response to the violence.<sup>6</sup> The state legislature and the executive worked together to pass historic gun safety legislation.<sup>7</sup> But these initiatives need to be combined with the necessary financial resources to stem the violence at its core. **Well-resourced and funded communities do not see the same levels of gun violence - whether that be incidents, injuries, or homicides - that Rochester sees.**<sup>8</sup> In 2021, Rochester saw 232 shootings, and 53 fatalities.<sup>9</sup> Comparing this to the other upstate cities - none see numbers this high, nor when adjusted for a per-capita basis - none see a greater level of violence.<sup>10</sup> Buffalo, a city of considerably more people, saw fewer shootings and fatalities than Rochester.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Albany and Syracuse, both smaller in population than Rochester, saw fewer shootings and fatalities on a per capita basis.<sup>12</sup>

Rochester's resource deficiency is not only appearing in the Gun Violence epidemic, as Child Poverty rates are at truly harrowing and historic levels within the city limits.<sup>13</sup> The Child Poverty rate in the city of Rochester is staggering.<sup>14</sup> In 2021, 48.2% of children lived under the poverty level in Rochester.<sup>15</sup> Almost half of all children are living in poverty. **It is worth acknowledging that Syracuse and Buffalo see equal or comparable rates of child poverty (48.4% and 42.3%).**<sup>16</sup> **However, Rochester does not see a comparable funding allocation based on its population and parity with the other cities.**<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Child Poverty rates this high paired with the current levels of Gun Violence, put Rochester into an immense negative feedback loop that will only be solved with the needed resources. Children living in poverty are

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>6</sup> City of Rochester, *Gun Violence State of Emergency Proclamation*, Local State of Emergency, Mayor Malik. D Evans, July 21, 2022; August 18, 2022; September 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Governor, *Governor Hochul Signs Landmark Legislative Package to Strengthen Gun Laws and Protect New Yorkers*, June 6th, 2022. Office of the Governor, *Governor Hochul Signs Landmark Legislation to Strengthen Gun Laws and Bolster Restrictions on Concealed Carry Weapons in Response to Reckless Supreme Court Decision*, July 1, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Figure 1, Figure 2

<sup>9</sup> RPD Open Data Portal, *Rochester, NY*, retrieved from: <https://data-rpdny.opendata.arcgis.com/>

<sup>10</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>11</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>12</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>13</sup> Children's Agenda. *Nearly Half of All Children in Rochester Live in Poverty, Second Highest in the Nation*, Alex Love, Copyright 2022 Nexstar Media Inc

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Spectrum News, *CNY foundation seeing high child poverty rates in Syracuse*, Katelynn Ulrich, Updated 6:41 Pm Et Mar. 22, 2022 Published 5:56 Pm Et Mar. 22, 2022

<sup>17</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

more likely to be homeless, face eviction, and be exposed to violence.<sup>18</sup> Poverty thus adds to the experience of violence, and the violence continues to take victims - the pattern needs to change.<sup>19</sup>

Factors never happen in isolation, the challenges Rochester is facing when it comes to resource deficiency, Gun Violence, and Child Poverty, go on to affect every fiber of the city's community. Just as child poverty leads children to more likely encounter violence, it also leads to higher rates of undiagnosed or untreated mental illness, and a lack of preventive health measures.<sup>20</sup> The higher rates of illness then lead to higher stress on our medical facilities, especially the individuals staffing them.<sup>21</sup> If changes do not happen, the fatigue of these issues will only further break down the systems of support we have left in Rochester - the resources need to be delivered.

### **Our Ask and Next Steps**

Thus, with the aforementioned systemic and critical challenges facing the people of Rochester, New York State must deliver the necessary resources to better the lives of residents. **The AIM funding disparity must be corrected in the upcoming state budget - a city of 211,000 people can no longer afford a per capita funding stream well below its counterparts.**<sup>22</sup>

The \$417.00 per capita funding rate for Rochester, is lower than the \$482.00 per capita rate Syracuse sees - a city containing 50,000 less residents than Rochester.<sup>23</sup> At the very least, rates for Rochester need to be on par with our upstate counterparts. New York must address the rate differences, giving Rochester an additional \$13M (to match Syracuse) to \$34M (to match Buffalo) in annual AIM funding.

In addition, New York State must provide Rochester a one time sum of \$130M (\$13M for the last 10 years of underinvestment) to correct the historic underfunding Rochester has received over the past years that would begin to solve the systemic challenges the city is facing.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Matt Barnum, *As pandemic aid runs out, America is set to return to a broken funding system*, Chalkbeat, August 23, 2022; Holly Foster, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Anne Martin, *Poverty/Socioeconomic Status and Exposure to Violence in the Lives of Children and Adolescents*, The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression, Chapter 35, Daniel J Flannery, Alexander T. Vazsonyi, Irwin D. Waldman, June 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Spectrum News, *RPD: 3-year-old boy hit by gunfire*, Keegan Trunick and Staff, September 29, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Barnum, *As pandemic aid runs out, America is set to return to a broken funding system*, Chalkbeat, August 23, 2022

<sup>21</sup> Rochester First, *It continues to take a toll: Rochester gun violence impacts local hospital staff*, Alex Love, October 3, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>23</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

<sup>24</sup> See Figure 1, See Figure 2

## Link Between Decreased Funding & Increased Violence

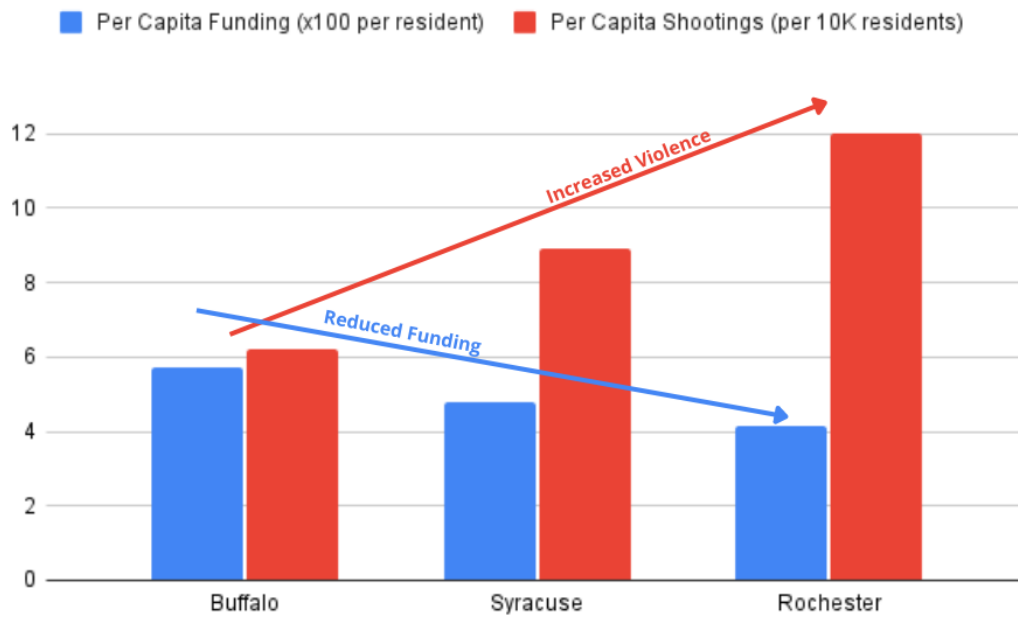


Figure 1

\*Funding numbers via the NYS Budget and Revenue Office, Shooting statistics are from GIVE Monthly report from the Division of Criminal Justice Services

## Correlation Between Underfunding and Violence

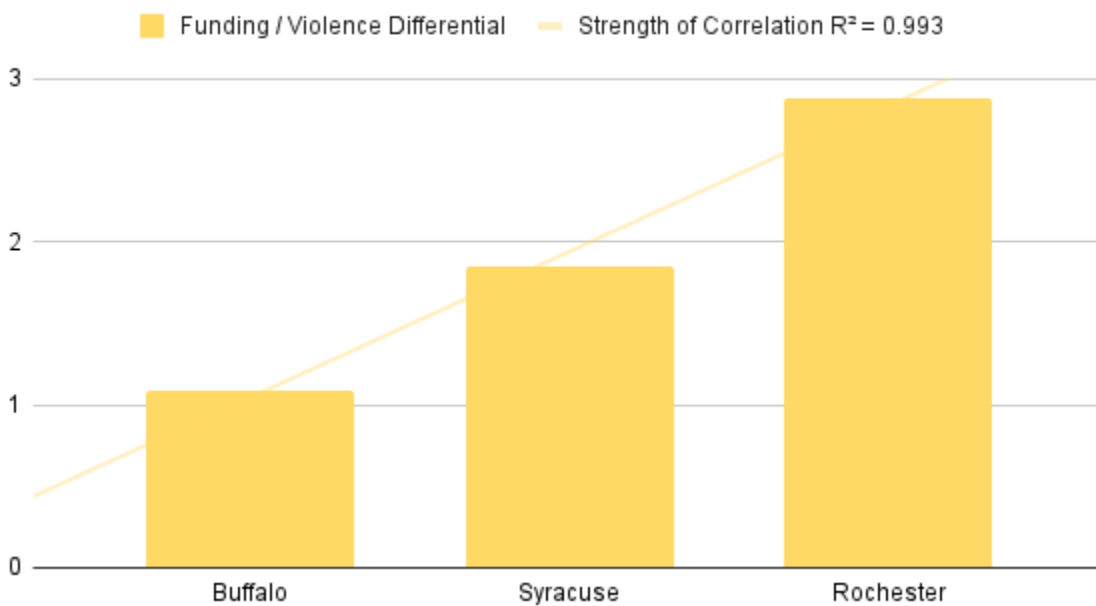


Figure 2