

TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CITES 2

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I would like to thank the New York State Senate for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of the Poughkeepsie City School District and City of Poughkeepsie.

My testimony will cover the effects of concentrated poverty in small upstate cities, most notably Poughkeepsie. My testimony will provide insight into concentrated poverty's implications and its impact on student school success and future economic mobility.

The City of Poughkeepsie, the county seat of Dutchess County, is a small metropolitan community of approximately five square miles. It is located on the Hudson River about 70 miles south of Albany and 70 miles north of New York City.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the estimated population is approximately 32,010 residents. The racial composition is primarily made up of three major groups: White (44.7%), Black (33.9%), and Latino (21.2%). The median citywide household income is \$48,805, and the percentage of people in poverty is approximately 19%.

It is well established that the City of Poughkeepsie and other small cities throughout New York, like it, share the exact effects of concentrated poverty. Having resided over twenty years in Buffalo, NY, and having worked in the school district, I will share with you that the implications of poverty in Poughkeepsie, NY, are similar, but due to the size of the city, far fewer resources and avenues for economic mobility, the sheer concentration of poverty has a more significant impact on the residents as well as city and county governments.

Concentrated poverty is a significant contributor to poor housing, higher crime rates, high school dropout rates, health issues, food insecurities, and meaningful employment opportunities.

According to the [Opportunity Atlas](#), a website on social mobility data, the result of a collaboration between researchers at the Census Bureau, Harvard University, and Brown University, low-income black males that grew up in the City of Poughkeepsie's poorest neighborhoods – which are located on its northside – have a median household income of \$14,000 as adults. This is on par with the worst neighborhoods in the entire US for intergenerational mobility for low-income black males. According to the same website, the incarceration rate for this population is 23%, and the job growth rate is 3.9%.

According to the data from a recent report from the federal government, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2003 and [Population Reference Bureau](#), child poverty in metropolitan areas – the big cities and suburbs – is about 15 percent. "For the 12.3 million children who live in small towns and rural areas, the poverty rate... [is] 19.8%."

Socioeconomic status continues to be the leading determinant of educational attainment in the United States. Research shows that two-thirds of the variance in student achievement can be explained by out-of-school factors (home environment, health issues, poverty, food insecurity).

Children in impoverished communities enter school with fewer academic skills than peers growing up in other communities. These children tend to be at least one grade level behind their peers in other communities. These disparities translate into lower academic achievement, childhood mental health challenges, and alarming high school graduation rates, which are predictors of low economic mobility and a lack of financial stability in adulthood and are a precursor to intergenerational poverty (poverty that exists through multiple generations due to children not having an opportunity to escape the poor economic conditions that they grew up in).

Historically, the Poughkeepsie City School District has yielded a 20% dropout rate, an annual graduation rate of 60%, and far too many students, in grades 3 – 8, state testing results indicating they are below grade level. While city and school district efforts, employed since 2020, have increased student success, the challenges associated with an absence of sustainable city and school district resources and funding threaten these efforts to eliminate concentrated and, thus, intergenerational poverty.

What is being learned in Poughkeepsie is that a school, home, and community approach to addressing children's academic, social, and emotional needs - prenatal to college/career - is a promising model for addressing the causes and effects of poverty. Through participating in [Harvard University's EdRedesign Lab's By All Means Communities of Practice](#), Poughkeepsie is learning from communities across the country how they are employing effective practices, approaches, and models to combat the effects of concentrated and intergenerational poverty effectively. Initiatives such as the [Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet](#), [Poughkeepsie City School District Community Schools Initiative](#), Prekindergarten Expansion Initiative, etc., are modeled after initiatives that have yielded success in large and small cities nationwide. Local implementation data delivers positive results but is threatened by not having dedicated funding streams.

As the Senate's Standing Committee on Cities 2 continues to explore the causes and effects of poverty and concentrated poverty, I offer to provide myself and the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet as a resource to learn more about our local efforts. These efforts have attracted the attention of the Lt. Governor, NYS Regents, the US Department of Education, the White House, and national philanthropic organizations who are interested in Poughkeepsie's approach to developing a citywide cradle-to-career agenda for youth and families in the City of Poughkeepsie.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Poughkeepsie City School District and City of Poughkeepsie. I applaud the action of the Standing Committee on Cities 2. Our communities' viability depends on our ability to address the needs of its future citizens and leaders – our children.
