



July 28, 2022

ARPA - RFP Coordinator  
Monroe County Purchasing and Central Services  
39 West Main Street  
Room 200  
Rochester, New York 14614

Dear RFP Coordinator:

I am pleased to write in support of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center (SJNC)'s application for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding in conjunction with Bring Monroe Back—Monroe County, NY Recovery Plan—and in response to the Request for Proposals (RFP) with a release date of June 03, 2022.

SJNC was founded in Rochester in 1993 by the Sisters of St. Joseph and became an independent 501(c)(3) in 2013. The organization was established in response to a community need for accessible and affordable health care services. Over its almost 30-year history, SJNC has delivered primary health care, dental, mental health counseling, and social services to thousands of uninsured and under-insured people in the Greater Rochester region. The organization does not accept private or public insurance reimbursements and relies upon individual donations from community members, as well as, grant funding. SJNC is a vital partner and collaborator with dozens of community-based organizations, the two major health systems in our region—University Rochester Medical Center and Rochester Regional Health System, numerous Colleges and Universities—including St. John Fisher University, and the Monroe County Department of Public Health.

While I support the Neighborhood Center's ARPA funding application in its totality, there are several components of the proposal that deserve further elaboration and emphatic support:

- The Neighborhood Center is housed in three conjoined buildings that are each well over 100 years old. While these former homes, which were renovated and repurposed years ago, provide a welcoming and inclusive environment, they are in desperate need of renovation and repair. Priorities include a new roof and elevator, additional insulation to prevent ice damming, and renovation of the waiting area, exam rooms, and dental operatories. Providing this funding would not only provide vital support to SJNC, but it would be a significant investment in the overall health of the Greater Rochester community.
- SJNC is an epitome of a transformational model of health care. The proposed funding would allow it to expand on its long history of innovation and to continue in its vital role as the "safety net for the safety net." When individuals have nowhere else to turn, they seek refuge, support, and health services from the Neighborhood Center. In the context of their recent strategic plan, they aim to partner with community-based organizations to reach more potential patients/clients and to

provide services to those that are directly impacted by racism, gun violence, depression, COVID, inadequate access to health care, and much more. They hope to collaborate with faith-based communities, and neighborhood gathering places—such as barbershops and salons— to meet folks “where they’re at” both literally and figuratively. At a time when the primary care and mental health services are stretched to a breaking point, and wait lists for services are exorbitantly long, SJNC provides unheralded access of just a few days for the most serious and urgent of matters and a few weeks for more routine care.

- The Neighborhood Center is also a “training ground” for professionals entering a diverse range of disciplines including mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy, primary care, specialty care—including ophthalmology, surgery and procedures, and cardiology—nursing, advanced practice providers including physicians assistants and nurse practitioners, and pharmacy students. Students from locations such as St. John Fisher University, John Hopkins University, Utica College, Harvard Medical, University Rochester—Department of Psychiatry, Roberts Wesleyan, University of Rochester—Warner School, Nazareth College, State University of New York at Brockport, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Medaille have all completed placements at SJNC and been influenced by the Center’s unique model of care. Through these relationships, the health center is guiding the next generation of practitioners and helping to return the emphasis from a fee for service/transactional model to a patient/client focused approach to services.

I would implore Monroe County to support the Neighborhood Center as it continues to provide health care and supportive services to the most vulnerable and those who are most in need of accessible and affordable health care—including the working poor, undocumented immigrants, the uninsured, and a disproportionate number of people of color.

As a longtime supporter of SJNC, a Board member, professor, Dean, and community leader, I am well aware of the vital role that the health center fills in the Greater Rochester community. SJNC provides services and health access to individuals who would have nowhere else to go. I wholeheartedly support the organization’s request and strongly advocate that the proposal be funded.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Christine R. Birnie, RPh, PhD  
Professor and Dean  
Wegmans School of Pharmacy