



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF  
**ADAM J. BELLO**  
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**For Immediate Release**

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## **COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES \$1.3 MILLION ARPA INVESTMENT FOR A TRANSFORMATIONAL MOBILE WELDING WORKFORCE PROGRAM**

**ROCHESTER, NY** — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today joined State University of New York (SUNY) Vice Chancellor Dr. F. Shadi Shahedipour-Sandvik, SUNY Brockport President Dr. Heidi Macpherson, University Center for Academic and Workforce Development Associate Provost and Director Lisa Jackson and Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (REOC) Dean/Executive Director Dr. Roosevelt Mareus to cut the ribbon on REOC's new mobile welding lab. The mobile welding lab offers training programs to all eligible residents as well as at-risk youth and individuals on parole with a goal of removing barriers to employment. The equipment was purchased with \$1.3 million of Monroe County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

The lab is housed in a large trailer with eight stations, providing students with the skills needed for entry-level work as welders. The 18-week hands-on training program introduces students to various components and equipment used in the welding trade through three new courses: Basic Shielded Metal Arc; Advanced Shielded Metal Arc; and Gas Metal Arc Welding

"Welders are vital to our infrastructure and economy; their skills are essential for the production of most manufactured goods in America. Our county is facing a growing shortage of welders, and to ensure that we are able to sustain this vital part of our work force, we are supporting REOC to offer welding training opportunities that break down barriers and promote equity in the workforce," **said County Executive Bello**. "I extend my gratitude to Dr. Roosevelt Mareus and his team for creating this transformative program and special thanks to our federal delegation for securing this funding and the county legislature for approving it."

"The Rochester EOC is excited to provide a new welding program to Rochester, Monroe County, and surrounding areas via the REOC Mobile Welding Lab. This transformative program allows the REOC to bring this valuable training to individuals where they live, where they work, and where they gather – making this unique mobile welding lab the first of its kind for the area," **said Dr. Roosevelt Mareus, Executive Director of REOC**. "The possibilities to offer an in-demand training program without the barrier of transportation will exceed the reach to all individuals as we deliver this program throughout the

community. Thank you to Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and the Monroe County Legislature for their continued support."

**SUNY Chancellor John B. King Jr. said,** "SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers provide a launching pad to in-demand careers in communities across our state, and the mobile welding expansion at the Rochester EOC will support adult learners where they are, by providing an excellent education that will allow students to enter the welding profession, and succeed in it. My thanks to Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and the Monroe County Legislature for their ongoing commitment to the Rochester EOC."

"The opening of the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center's Mobile Welding Lab will further enhance and expand the life-changing work that the REOC does each day. By eliminating transportation barriers, it will provide an opportunity for those in underserved communities to enter a field that is in high demand not only across the United States, but right here in Monroe County," **said SUNY Brockport President Dr. Heidi McPherson.** "I'd like to thank County Executive Bello, our county legislators, and our federal government delegation for their support of this program, REOC, and SUNY Brockport."

The New York State Department of Labor estimates nearly 180 welding job openings annually in the nine-county Finger Lakes region. According to the American Welding Society, the industry is expected to face a nationwide shortage of 360,000 welders by 2027 because of industry growth and retirement of an aging workforce.

The mobile welding program aligns with equity goals outlined in the 2021 [Racial and Structural Equity \(RASE\) Commission](#) recommendations. REOC is partnering with the Monroe County Sheriff's Office to allow formerly incarcerated individuals and at-risk youth who are deemed in good standing by law enforcement to participate in this program. The goal is to help them enter the skilled workforce and provide alternative options to recidivism by offering skills training in a high-growth and vital industry.

"Breaking down employment barriers for at-risk youth, those returning from incarceration, and others who face significant challenges securing employment is critical to giving everyone in our community the opportunity to thrive—and I'm proud to have secured federal funds to help do just that," **said Congressman Joe Morelle.** "This \$1.3 million investment in the REOC's Mobile Welding Lab will help give REOC the tools and resources they need to set people on the path to success. I'm grateful for County Executive Bello's continued prioritization of projects that help build a brighter future for families in our community, and I look forward to our work together."

"Our communities need workforce development efforts that can lead to gainful employment and address gaps in the local economy. Throughout Upstate and including Monroe County, we do not have enough skilled trades members, such as welders, to meet local demand. With this mobile welding lab, critical training opportunities can be extended to underserved communities in Rochester and beyond, helping to diversify our trades workforce and spur economic growth. I commend County Executive Bello and REOC for this initiative, and I was proud to secure federal funding through the *American*

*Rescue Plan Act* for innovative programs such as this one.” – **U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**.

“Workforce training that meets people where they are is essential for so many in our community and maximizes effective job training and placement,” **said US Senator Charles Schumer**. “I fought hard to secure funds for local governments in the American Rescue Plan Act, and I applaud County Executive Bello and the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center for their commitment to developing our local workforce and for their innovative approach in making job training accessible to all. This program is a game-changer for our community and our economy.”

For more information or to apply for welding classes at REOC, click [here](#).



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