



THE BUFFALO NEWS

## **Letter: County's new hiring policy will ease poverty, inequality**

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Erie County took a big step forward last week when County Executive Mark Poloncarz enacted a first source hiring policy. The new policy ensures that when the county hires private firms for its construction projects, 100 percent of the work will be done by residents of Western New York, 70 percent by residents of Erie County and 20 percent by residents who live in high poverty neighborhoods or are themselves experiencing poverty.

Last year, when the organizations in the Partnership for the Public Good voted on their top policy priorities, one of the winning proposals was to increase the use of “first source” or “targeted” hire policies when public dollars are spent. Our partners understand that the best way to fight poverty and inequality is with quality jobs. In fact, when we prepared a report on “Working Toward Equality: Employment and Race in Buffalo,” we highlighted first source policies as one of the best tools available for promoting equal opportunity.

People who live in high poverty ZIP codes – urban, suburban or rural – face many disadvantages. Some employers screen by ZIP codes, while others fall prey to racial prejudices. Areas of concentrated poverty often lack the social networks and connections that lead to quality jobs. First source policies help make sure that these unfair disadvantages do not exclude qualified workers from good jobs. We applaud Erie County for “working toward equality,” and we urge other municipalities and economic development agencies to follow suit.

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