



PRESS RELEASE
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Contact: Amy Hanauer
ahanauer@policymattersohio.org
216.361.2101

Research shows overincarceration damages communities

As the debate around Issue 1 intensifies, Policy Matters Ohio is releasing a survey of peer reviewed studies which show that prison can hurt families and communities, and leave people worse off than before they served their time.

The two-page literature review, written by criminologist Donald T. Hutcherson, Ph.D, and Policy Matters Director Amy Hanauer, cites more than 30 studies that demonstrate the adverse ways overincarceration harms families, the economy and communities.

“Serving time makes it harder to find employment, gain education, stay married or in a committed relationship, or fulfill parental obligations,” Hanauer said. “Those who’ve been in prison are more likely to be in poverty, to need public assistance, and to be in poor health. Their neighborhoods are less functional. Even their children are more likely to be unhealthy and to struggle in school.”

This year Ohio will spend \$1.8 billion to incarcerate nearly 50,000 people. Many are in prison either for violating probation in ways that are not themselves a crime, or for possessing or using drugs. At least 95 percent of them will eventually be released. Even then, they, their families, and their communities continue to suffer because spending time in prison makes it permanently harder to build a new life.

In November, Ohio voters will decide on State Issue 1. If the ballot amendment passes, people convicted of nonviolent, low-level drug possession, or those who commit non-criminal probation violations, will be redirected to community sanctions or treatment instead of prison. People in prison will be able to earn reductions in their sentences by participating in education and rehabilitation programs. The money saved by reducing the prison population will be redirected to communities to fund victims’ services, rehabilitation and safety programs. An earlier report from Policy Matters estimated that Issue 1 would reduce the prison population by about 10,000 and redirect \$136 million to communities.

“Our research shows that Issue 1 will take much-needed steps towards reducing Ohio’s prison population and helping people who have served time get on with their lives,” Hutcherson said. “The positive effects will ripple throughout their families, communities and the economy.”

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Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.