

City News (Ohio)

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New Report: Ohio prison spending grows five times faster than higher education spending
by Staff Reports
Cleveland City News
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More African American men incarcerated in Ohio than enrolled in college

Washington, DC and Cleveland -A new report shows that during the 1980s and 1990s, Ohio spending on corrections grew at five times the rate of state spending on higher education. By the close of the millennium, there were more African American men in prison and jail in Ohio than in universities or colleges.

The report, "Cellblocks or Classrooms? The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African American Men," provides state by state analysis of corrections and higher education spending, and is the latest in a series of reports by the Justice Policy Institute to show the fiscal impact of the nation's overuse of prison as a solution to social problems. Drawing upon data from the National Association of State Budget Officers, Cellblocks or Classrooms? shows that as corrections expenditures have grown, state spending on increases on higher education have not kept pace with increased spending on prisons.

In Ohio, national surveys of state expenditure show that between 1985 and 2000, higher education spending increased by 38 percent or \$670 million while corrections spending skyrocketed by 211 percent or \$1.026 billion. While Ohio spending on higher education (\$2.432 billion) exceeded what was spent on corrections (\$1.1512 billion) in 2000, over the last 15 years, spending on prisons grew at 5.5 times the rate of higher education.

"This report shows that Ohio's colleges and universities have lost budget battles to the growing prison system," said Amy Hanauer, executive director of Policy Matters Ohio. "With harder economic times ahead, we must reduce Ohio's reliance on expensive prisons so that we can invest in the higher education system that is so crucial to our economic well-being."

From: Policy Matters Ohio
The cost of attending college in Ohio is increasingly out of reach.



Between 1992 and 2001 in Ohio, tuition increased by 32 percent at public four-year institutions and by 26 percent at private four-year institutions. New students starting next week at Ohio State University will pay 19 percent more than new students paid last fall. Tuition is increasing at a time when higher education is more important. During the 1980s and 1990s, Ohio workers with only a high school diploma saw their wages drop by 13.9 percent. Even workers with 1-3 years beyond high school experienced an 8.7 percent wage decline during this period. Only workers with a bachelor's degree or more experienced wage growth between 1979 and 2000.

The progress made in improving African American access to college has been eclipsed by the growth of the nation's African American male incarcerated population. Cellblocks or Classrooms finds that in 1999/2000, there were more African American men in prison in Ohio (23,000) than in the higher education system (20,000), and the report estimates that 38 times as many African American men were added to the states' prison system as were added to colleges during the last two decades, and in 2000. Nationally, Cellblocks or Classrooms? estimates that in 2000, there were 791,600 African American men in prison and jail, and 603,000 in higher education.

"People who attend college are positioned to become productive, taxpaying citizens for years to come," said Reverend Marvin McMickle of Antioch Baptist Church. "Those who go to prison carry a felony status forever, and have lifetime limits on their ability to go to college or get a decent job. This is bad public policy based upon a lack of common sense."

The report recommends that states choose new policies that would save money and reduce incarceration, such as sentencing reform, parole reform and treatment plus effective community supervision in lieu of imprisonment for non-violent offenders.

A summary of the findings from Cellblocks or Classrooms for Ohio is being released locally by Policy Matters Ohio www.policymattersohio.org, a non-partisan, non-profit policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus, funded primarily by the George Gund Foundation. To obtain a fact sheet with the principal Ohio findings, please visit their website at www.policymattersohio.org The media is invited review an embargoed copy of the study, and summaries of the findings in the 10 largest states, at www.justicepolicy.org (User Name: COC, Password: 101).

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