

Statement of Alex Crohn
General Counsel, Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

New York City Council
Higher Education Access for Incarcerated and Recently Incarcerated Individuals
Committee on Higher Education

September 22, 2015

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Committee on Higher Education. My name is Alex Crohn and I am the General Counsel of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. I am joined here today by Deputy Commissioner Winette Saunders and Executive Director of Educational Services Francis Torres from the Department of Correction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice advises the Mayor on public safety strategy and, together with partners inside and outside government, develops and implements policies aimed at achieving three main goals: reducing crime, reducing unnecessary arrests and incarceration and promoting fairness. To the extent that crime reduction is simply about controlling behavior and managing risk, we now know that there are a number of strategies beyond traditional law enforcement that can lead to lower crime while building trust and creating the strong neighborhoods necessary for enduring crime reduction.

Our office strongly supports expanding access to higher education among incarcerated individuals. From a criminal justice standpoint, expanding access to education is a proven strategy for reducing recidivism and preventing crime: according to a 2013 study by the Rand Corporation, prisoners who participated in educational programs were 43% less likely to return to prison within three years than those who did not participate. In New York State, the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) has supported using private funds for post-secondary education for incarcerated individuals, resulting in programs such as the Bard Prison Initiative and the Cornell Prison Education Program. Here in New York City, we also strive to provide services and to connect people to services after discharge. The Rand report and other extensive studies, spanning several decades, have established and affirmed education's effect on preventing further crimes.

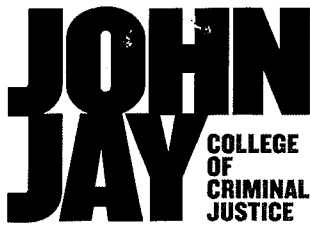
In an effort to broaden this access to education, the Obama administration recently announced a plan, the "Second Chance Pell Grant Program," that will provide State and Federal inmates access to Pell grants — education grants provided by the government — for the first time since 1994. The New York City-based Vera Institute of Justice will provide technical assistance to the correctional facilities as they partner with academic institutions to provide educational opportunities as part of the experimental program. The City wholeheartedly supports the establishment of this Second Chance Pell program and its efforts to expand on educational opportunities to this underserved criminal justice population.

Educating inmates better prepares them for life after prison. Individuals face a host of barriers upon release, and increasing educational attainment can increase both employability and earnings, which has a number of collateral benefits. Research shows that prison education not only reduces recidivism but increases chances of employment when inmates enter the general population. There exists a strong empirical link between access to high quality educational programming and successful re-entry post-release. Successful re-entry leads to fewer repeat offenders and stronger neighborhoods, creating virtuous cycles that ensure enduring drops in crime.

Higher education programs are traditionally associated with prisons, where people can participate in multi-year programs, but the NYC Correction Department provides a number of programming opportunities. The Department partners with community groups to provide literacy programs, career and technical education, skills development, reentry services, and some post-secondary education programs. Three programs are specifically focused on higher education. These provide services inside to help transition incarcerated individuals to college upon discharge.

- The College and Community Fellowship (CCF) program provides information on college applications and financial literacy skills. Once individuals are released and accepted to college, participants are given an academic stipend upon completion of 12 credits and 2.5 GPA.
- Another program is College Way. College Way volunteer educators provide a college readiness class on key successful college life, college admissions tests, and college mathematics. Professors and Adjunct Lecturers provide lectures on mathematics, business and other subjects.
- The third higher-education program, implemented in 2012, is the DOC-Manhattan College Inside Out program. Undergraduate students from the college and selected “inside students” take a course on Criminal Justice Ethics at Rikers Island. Upon completion, inside students who meet the class requirements are admitted to the college upon release free of charge. This is the first “Inside-Out Prison Exchange” program on Rikers Island.

By working to support higher education programs for those rejoining our communities, programs such as the Second Chance Pell Grant Program and the aforementioned DOC initiatives will help to improve reentry outcomes and ensure public safety. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today.



Ann L. Jacobs
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Testimony of Ann L. Jacobs
Director, Prisoner Reentry Institute
John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY

Before the New York City Council Higher Education Committee
Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I am Ann Jacobs, the director of the Prisoner Reentry Institute (PRI), one of the research centers at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The mission of PRI is to undertake innovative reentry projects that contribute to a deeper understanding of what it takes for justice-involved people to live successfully in the community, and that further develop the effectiveness of the people and systems that work with them.

PRI's current work is clustered in several key areas and education is central to all of them. PRI administers the New York City Justice Corps, a City-funded program to reduce the recidivism of justice-involved 18-24 year olds in New York City by changing the relationship they have with their community. In a few moments, my colleague, Bianca van Heydoorn, will describe PRI's extensive work to make higher education accessible to both incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. PRI is also committed to developing the next generation of criminal justice professionals and scholars through fellowship initiatives that provide college students with coursework, financial assistance and supportive relationships at the same time that they participate in extended internships in youth justice and policy advocacy agencies.

PRI's research initiatives have focused on understanding reentry "in the first person," i.e. from the perspective of the people directly affected. *The Gifts They Bring* explores the experience of previously incarcerated students as they transition into college students; *View from the Inside* describes living in three quarter houses; and forthcoming research on students in our prison college program will delve into the life histories of students who were incarcerated, often at a very young age, and who are returning to their communities almost two decades later with a commitment to higher education and confronting the many challenges of reentry.

Among these challenges, housing, a job, and health and mental health treatment get the most attention, and education has gotten the least. Yet education is the one intervention that we see consistently change the trajectory of a person's life. The City Council resolution in support of President Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program details what we all now know: higher education reduces recidivism dramatically, increases employability and raises earnings. It has the potential to reduce economic disparity and to address the devastating consequences that

our existing educational and justice systems have had, particularly on people of color. It also has beneficial ripple effects on the families and the communities in which the students reside. Former NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Commissioner Brian Fischer says that the presence of a college program in a prison even improves the prison for everyone. College professors who teach inside prisons say that the incarcerated students are the best students they have ever had. And so on.

The anti-Pell “Kids not Cons” rhetoric presents a false dichotomy. Even at the height of prison college programs in the early 1990’s, prisoners were less than 1% of the Pell recipients. Funding incarcerated students did not take away from available resources for so called “good students.” We don’t have to choose. In fact, we have a collective interest in providing access to education to anyone who can and who chooses to do the work.

This inclusiveness is one of the fundamental principles of the City University of New York. It simply should not be acceptable to us to allow the time and intellectual capital of incarcerated people be wasted by lack of access to education. That is why CUNY supports the work that PRI leads to restore college to our prisons and, as importantly, to create networks of academic and social support that attract, enroll, retain and graduate students when they are back in the community.

We believe that restoration of Pell and TAP eligibility for incarcerated people is a smart investment. And we hope to convince you that there also has to be an investment in the community supports that are required for someone to get to college and succeed there.

I am going to turn now to Bianca van Heydoorn who will describe the continuum of services that we have created at CUNY.

TESTIMONY OF GABRIELLE STARR
DEAN, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

Good Afternoon Chairwoman Barron and fellow Council Members, my name is Gabrielle Starr and I am the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at New York University. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today as you review programs that provide access to higher education for incarcerated individuals.

I am very pleased to share with you details about a program NYU launched this past spring providing educational access to incarcerated individuals. The NYU Prison Education Program brings college education to individuals at the Wallkill Correctional Facility, located in Ulster County New York, approximately two hours outside New York City. The Wallkill Facility, which is a medium security, all-male prison, was assigned to us through coordination with the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. It did not previously offer higher education programs; and the population is important because many of the individuals return home within five years or fewer.

The NYU Prison Education Program offers credit-bearing university courses that enable students to earn an Associate of Arts Degree from NYU as well as non-credit bearing workshops. Because the program is supported by a \$500,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, the courses are provided to incarcerated students at no cost to them. Once released from prison, students in the program will be able to continue their education at NYU or transfer credits to another institution. NYU is currently raising funds to support scholarships that would allow these students to continue their work towards a Bachelor of Arts degree at NYU.

In addition to courses, the NYU Prison Education Program includes educational and employment counseling, community support for families, and other services such as legal assistance to address human rights, housing, and employment issues. By offering these additional support services, the program is committed to developing opportunities for our students while in prison and upon their release. We have also partnered with the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions, which is one of the nation's leading community-based organizations that tackle post-prison release issues.

We began the program this past Spring semester with two courses offered; four additional courses were offered over the summer semester, and we are currently offering four courses this fall. In total, 70 men have participated in the program, so far, which includes 52 students taking for-credit academic classes as well as 18 individuals participating in non-credit programming such as book clubs, performing arts workshops and meditation workshops. Courses are taught by NYU faculty and include intensive liberal arts study, such as Critical Perspectives on Justice through Creative Writing, as well as skills-based courses such as Foundations of Speech Communications. We hope to offer courses in law, business and social work in the coming semesters.

While the Wallkill Facility is outside the five boroughs, it's worth noting that 51% of the individuals taking part in NYU's Prison Education Program, in response to a survey, report being from New York City. This program has allowed NYU to re-engage in social justice education in a manner that is immediately relevant to our city and community. We believe that programs improving access to higher education for incarcerated individuals such as NYU's offers families, communities and individuals a safer, better and more productive future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I welcome any questions you have.



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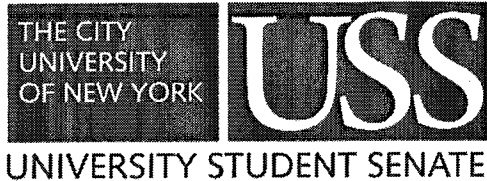
**NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Hearing: The President's Second
Chance Pell Pilot Program**

*Testimony of Gabriella Mungalsingh, Student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice
September 22, 2015*

In a country where incarceration is astronomical, it is shown to disproportionately affect not only minorities, but negatively affect our country as a whole. We are at a time in which investment in education is a necessity to ensure the success of future generations, including those who are incarcerated. Such individuals are subjected to a moral debate, and are viewed negatively upon by policy makers and citizens alike. However, incarcerated individuals are just as valuable to society, and investing in their education will greatly benefit our goals for development in innovative ways. This includes perspectives on issues regarding race, social stratification, poverty, and the like. Pell Grants to create such opportunities for incarcerated individuals will give them a second chance to obtain an education, succeed, and give back to the community. Organizations and institutions such as the Prisoner Reentry Institute, and College Initiative are examples of people who believe that those who are incarcerated also deserve an education, a second chance.

Students such as myself who receive Pell Grants allow for independence, employment opportunities, and giving back to my community with the knowledge I have obtained from higher education. Those who are incarcerated already have a difficult time adjusting to external factors that could derail their success when leaving a facility. These factors include, but are not limited to mental health, money, and job security. It is essential for these individuals to receive financial assistance in order to adequately assess their current situations, and create opportunities for themselves when leaving the criminal justice system while adjusting to post-incarceration. It is imperative that those who have been affected by such conditions receive another opportunity to develop themselves, and change the way we perceive "criminals". Without financial assistance, how do we expect to gain a critical perspective on our criminal justice system, and push for reform if we keep those with the most experience locked away?

Gabriella Mungalsingh
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**NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Hearing: The President's Second
Chance Pell Pilot Program**

***Testimony of Oscar Martinez, Student at Lehman College
September 22, 2015***

Good morning. My name is Oscar Martinez. I currently serve as the Vice Chair for Senior College Affairs for the University Student Senate (USS) at CUNY.

I've been very fortunate to be able to experience college but not many are fortunate enough to be able and fulfill their dreams to earn a bachelor's degree. As a Latino I'm just one of the few who will earn a bachelor's degree and will be able to have a decent career in this new generation. Aren't we forgetting about the incarcerating individuals that won't be able to fulfill that dream to have a career and be the next lawyers, council, doctors, teachers, or engineer? In my opinion that's the people, we forget about and we don't even worry about their futures and hoping we can help those individuals to reintegrate themselves to our society. How can we stop our minorities specially the youth from making those huge mistakes that would deprive them from fulfilling their dreams?

One mistake is that not many parents worry about their sons and daughters to get an education and all they worry about is for them to finish high school and be able to find a job to pay the rent. Many parents work two jobs to fulfill the needs of their families and their kids sometimes grow on their own without that caring and loving feeling of I care about you and your education. This influences on the child to hang out with bad influences and leads to committing crimes, doing drugs and dropping out of school. I

don't mean to say that this is how Latino parents are but that's just my opinion of what I've seen personally. We need to start tackling the problem if we don't want our youth to make the same mistake. I'm great full to my parents for always supporting me and encouraging me to fulfill my dream of earning a college degree.

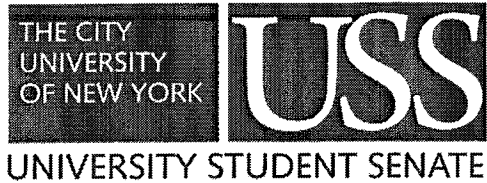
College is not only getting an education. Having personally earned an associate's degree and now in a few months to complete my bachelor's degree is something not many people expect a Latino to accomplish it. As a dreamer and the first one in my family to earn a degree in computer information systems is an achievement. I've learned a lot in my four years of college, met new people network, I got involved and improved my leadership skills. That college experience should be for everyone.

I'm glad to see the president of the United States taking the initiative to start this program that would allow Pell grants for incarcerated. He sees there is an issue and as a society we are not tackling it. I totally agree, incarcerated individuals deserve a second chance. Now we are in a generation where you need a bachelor's or master's degree to live work and get a good salary. People that come out of jail always have a difficulty integrating. Lets not keep making that same mistake over and over again.

I feel that this new initiative would give them hope to a new beginning. Knowing that they went thru a lot and felt that every door close on them. Now they would have the opportunity to earn a college degree to give back to their community and contribute to this country. In other words no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, education is the key to success. Everyone deserves the right to learn and be given a second chance.

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you".

B.B. King



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**NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Hearing: The President's Second
Chance Pell Pilot Program**

Testimony of Claudia Wald, Student at Hunter College

September 22, 2015

Testimony in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, which will initiate new models to allow incarcerated individuals to receive Pell Grants to finance their education.

My name is Claudia Wald. I am a Master's degree candidate at Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and a concerned citizen of New York City.

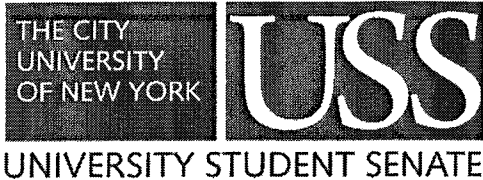
Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am in support of the Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, which will initiate new models to allow incarcerated individuals to receive Pell Grants to finance their education.

In 1994, Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA) to eliminate Pell Grant eligibility for students in federal and state penal institutions. The Second Chance Pell Pilot Program will allow, on a temporary basis, eligible incarcerated individuals to access federal financial aid for the first time in 20 years, giving inmates the opportunity to pursue life-changing postsecondary education, so as to find gainful employment and become productive citizens, successfully independent and financially stable Americans.

Indeed, preparing the more than 700,000 individuals released from state and federal prisons annually for successful reintegration back into society by improving their earning potential and employability would have a meaningful and positive impact on our

communities, particularly as many ex-offenders are concentrated in poor and minority neighborhoods. Such program will also save vast sums of money otherwise allocated to incarceration costs. The Second Chance Pell Pilot program will test new models to allow incarcerated Americans to receive Pell Grants and pursue the postsecondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs, support their families, and turn their lives around.



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**NYC Council Committee on Higher Education Hearing: The President's Second
Chance Pell Pilot Program**

***Testimony of Lucas Almonte, USS Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs
September 22, 2015***

Good morning. Chairwoman, Inez Barron and members of the committee. My name is Lucas Almonte, I am the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs for the University Student Senate (USS) at CUNY, and proud resident of Council District 10.

I am, like many of my colleagues at the University Student Senate, in support of the President Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program.

There is a growing consensus for the need to reform our criminal justice system, which has witnessed the exponential growth of our prison population following the laws passed in the mid-1990s. Former President Clinton has publically denounced the adverse effects of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act he vehemently advocated for and signed into law. In addition to tougher and longer sentences, the act ended federal effort to provide higher education programs to incarcerated individuals through PELL Grants funding. The time has come for our federal government to overhaul and reform our criminal justice system.

Restoring Pell Grants to incarcerated individuals is a sound financial investment as demonstrated by the abundant and clear research on the correlation between incarcerated individuals earning a higher education and the reduction of repeat offense warrant a review by our federal government.

But, beyond the data and research indicating the cost-effectiveness of educational programs in prisons—I do not think we should implement a government program simply because it’s cost-effective, but because it is the right thing to do—a postsecondary education can instill a profound sense of self-worth, hope, and opportunity in incarcerated people who typically see the doors of opportunity closed on them.

At the University Student Senate, our persistent advocacy for accessible higher education is grounded on our core belief that postsecondary education serves an effective instrument for social change, personal fulfillment, and economic mobility.

The President’s program is one of several essential tools needed to counteract mass incarceration and ensure the successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals back into society with vital vocational skills, knowledge, and optimism. As U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, for whom the Pell grant program is named, said on the Senate Floor in 1994: “Diplomas are crime stoppers.”¹

Prison should not remain a “revolving door” for those who are typically unemployed, uneducated, and relegated to a life of crime. We support The President’s Second Chance Pell Pilot Program. Thank you.

¹ Congressional Record Volume 140, Number 12 (Wednesday, February 9, 1994), *available at*: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-1994-02-09/html/CREC-1994-02-09-pt1-PgS28.htm>

City Council Hearing on Resolution in Support of Second Chance Pell Pilot Program.
Johnny Perez | Safe Reentry Mental Health Advocate
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September 22, 2015

My name is Johnny Perez and I am the Mental Health Safe Reentry Advocate at the Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project. I am also a father and a full time student at St. Francis College pursuing a degree in criminal justice.

But today I do not come to you as an advocate, I come to you as a person who not only served thirteen years in New York's Prison system, but also discovered the transformative power of education in a place where education is a commodity.

As a nation, we hold human dignity, self-betterment, and the belief in second chances in high esteem. We value these principles not because of our own life experiences, but because as people we recognize the value of investing in human potential. It's the reason we have educational institutions in the first place.

It wasn't until I found myself staring at the world from the inside of a human cage that I saw what wasting human potential looks like. I could not understand how some of the most creative, eloquent, and determined people I've ever known found themselves being housed in a place that dimmed their light. See, ignorance is similar to darkness and only education can serve as the illuminated light that eliminates that darkness.

In my 13 years in prison not once did I meet a criminal, I only met people who did not have the opportunity to live up to their full potential and instead became itemized inventory and property of our correctional system. I mean, imagine if the cure to cancer was stuck inside of the head of a person sitting in a prison cell without the necessary education to transform thought into reality.

City Council Hearing on Resolution in Support of Second Chance Pell Pilot Program.

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September 22, 2015

In my own experience, as a teenager I was not trying to decide between band camp and karate school. I was trying to decide which plea agreement I should take. I was trying to decide how I was going to help my mother put food on the table. Choices a fifteen year old should not be faced with.

When I discovered the power of education in prison it shifted my Paradigm in unimaginable ways. I came to see opportunity where before I only saw challenges, stepping stones where I only saw barriers. I pulled my pants up, groomed my hair, polished my vocabulary because I came to understand the power of first impressions; but more importantly, I came to not only understand my actions, but also understand them within the context of my environment. Because of that, I knew I could never again handle my problems with criminal solutions. That I could never again place myself in a situation where others had more power over me than I had over myself.

I have lost count of the number of men I have met behind those barbed wire fences who all told me the same thing. “Johnny, what kind of job you think I’ll get without a degree.” “Johnny, this is all I know how to do” “Johnny, I have kids to feed, bro.” Prison is filled with feelings of hopelessness, defeat, sorrow, but it’s also filled with earth-shaking potential that has yet to be realized.

And so I ask you today, see our prisons as a reservoir of potential and not as the human warehouses they have become. See the men and women not as itemized human inventory with an expiration date, but as an opportunity to invest in our society’s future. A chance

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for you to help change the very moral fabric of society which took away the transformative power of education in the first place.

And if for some reason you look me and are impressed by my eloquence, my professional accomplishments, or for one second think that I am “Different” Then please second guess your judgement, because I am only a living example of what can happen when we invest in human potential; an example of what can happen when we invest not in prisons, but in the people inside the prison.

TESTIMONY

The Council of the City of New York

Committee on Higher Education
Inez Barron, Chair

In Support of Resolution No. 837
Endorsing President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program

September 22, 2015
New York, New York

Prepared by
The Legal Aid Society
Special Litigation Unit, Criminal Defense Practice
Prisoners' Rights Project, Civil Practice
199 Water Street
New York, NY 10038

Presented by:

Cynthia Conti-Cook
Staff Attorney, Special Litigation Unit

The Legal Aid Society endorses the Resolution of the City Council in support of the President's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, which will allow research to be conducted regarding the best ways to provide quality higher education to incarcerated individuals. Thank you to Chair Barron and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution by Council Members Barron, Chin, King, Mendez, and Richards.

The Criminal Defense Practice of The Legal Aid Society is the largest defender organization in New York City, representing a very substantial proportion of the persons incarcerated in the New York City jail system, and through its Criminal Appeals Bureau, a significant fraction of the New York State prison population. Its Special Litigation Unit uniquely observes city-wide trends in policing, prosecutorial, and judicial decision-making. With these observations we provide back-up research assistance to hundreds of public defenders, prepare strategic impact litigation, and consult on policy reform with multiple levels of government. The Prisoners' Rights Project (PRP) of the Civil Division of Legal Aid brings class action and test case litigation on behalf of City and State prisoners, and assists them by intervening administratively on their behalf with jail and prison agencies and by advising them of their legal rights and how to enforce them. PRP has brought litigation to enforce the rights to general and special education of young prisoners in the City jails, *see Handberry v. Thompson*, 446 F.3d 335 (2d Cir. 2006); while this litigation involved secondary education rather than college, PRP staff have been impressed during their work on it at the strong desire of young prisoners to attend school as one of the only means available to them to try to get their lives back on track. In our work with women prisoners at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, our staff has

similarly been struck by the importance women give to those very limited college programs that are available to them, in terms both of enhancing their chances of getting employment and avoiding recidivism, and of helping them survive prison intact. They talk about how it keeps them from losing their minds from idleness, and even more importantly, how it makes them feel like they have done something to help repair their torn relationships with their families and children, whom they feel terrible about having abandoned and betrayed. It gives them a means to a sense of self-worth, which is a critical component of a successful transition to the outside world.

Thus we are very pleased to see the Obama Administration's efforts to move towards restoration of educational opportunities for prisoners. This past July at a prison in Jessup Maryland Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced the formation of a pilot project that would allow Pell Grants to pay for college tuition for some students in prison. The program is limited because in 1994 Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act¹ which had a prohibition on the use of Pell Grants to pay for prisoner college education. Under the new program the prohibition on eligibility is waived for research purposes. The purpose of the waiver is to allow the Department of Education to study the most effective ways to deliver college programs to prisoners.

Expanding opportunities for prisoner education reduces recidivism, increases the opportunities for employment after release from prison and saves our communities money on the cost of reincarceration. This view is no longer just a matter of anecdote. In 2013, the RAND Corporation published a meta-analytic review of the literature regarding

¹ P.L. 103-322 (1994)

correctional education.² With regard to recidivism the Rand study found that, “[A]fter examining the higher-quality research studies, we found that, on average, inmates who participated in correctional education programs has 43 percent lower odds of recidivating than inmates who did not. . . . This translated into a reduction in the risk of recidivating of 13 percentage points for those who participate in correctional education programs verses those who do not.”³

With regard to education RAND found that “the odds of obtaining employment post release among inmates who participated in correctional education (either academic or vocational programs) was 13% higher than the odds for those who had not participated.”⁴

With regard to cost RAND found that “for a correctional education program to be cost- effective, we estimated that a program would need to reduce the three year reincarceration rate by between 1.9 and 2.6 percentage points to break even. In fact, as noted, our meta-analytic findings show that participation in correctional education programs is associated with a 13 percentage-point reduction in incarceration three years after release from prison.”⁵

Rand made one further recommendation that set the stage for the recent announcement of the pilot program. “Going forward, there is a need to undertake studies that ‘drill down’ to get inside the black box and identify the characteristics of effective

² Lois M. Davis, Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders, Jeremy N. V. Miles, *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education, Summary*, The Rand Corporation, 2013

³ Id. at xvi

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id. at xviii

programs in terms of curriculum, dosage and quality.”⁶ The Pell Grant pilot program is intended to accomplish this important goal with regard to higher education.

With such important results already established, it is clear that expanded access to education is essential to making progress against recidivism, thereby helping reduce extremes of inequality in our society.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important subject.

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⁶ Id. at xix



YOUNG INVINCIBLES

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE HEARING:

“President Barack Obama’s Second Chance Pilot Program”

BY KEVIN STUMP, YOUNG INVINCIBLES

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

Good morning. My name is Kevin Stump and I am the Northeast Director for Young Invincibles, a nonpartisan, nonprofit dedicated to expanding economic opportunity for young people 18 to 34 relating to health care, higher education, and jobs. I thank the City Council for giving me the opportunity to testify in support of President Obama’s “Second Chance Pilot Program.”

Second Chance is a commonsense idea that will offer incarcerated young people an opportunity to afford an education and find a quality job by providing Pell Grants to incarcerated students who otherwise qualify. Young adults in the justice system already face major barriers trying to get back on track. Young people account for more than a quarter of the 10 million individuals involved with the prison system each year. Already facing harsher economic conditions than previous generations, and with much of their lives still ahead of them, incarcerated young adults working hard to get back on their feet deserve the chance for a quality education and a better life. Skyrocketing college costs push educational opportunities even further from reach. Prison-based education is the single most effective tool for lowering recidivism.ⁱ Pell Grants would provide access to crucial education and training, which has been proven to reduce unemployment, poverty, and ultimately lead to lower rates of incarceration and recidivism.

While Second Chance provides federal resources it does not address the lack of state aid available to New York inmates. The state currently spends \$60,000 each year to incarcerate one person and approximately \$3.6 billion in total costs for prisons. New York’s recidivism rate is 40 percent with an inmate population where 49.2 percent are African American, 24 percent are Hispanic, 24.1 percent are white and 2.7 percent identify as other.ⁱⁱ Despite the racial disparities, high financial cost of imprisoning residents, and a stubbornly high rate of recidivism, the New York hasn’t offered state aid through the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) in 20 years.

Since the discontinuation of Pell and TAP grants in the mid-90s, the number of college programs across the state supporting inmates pursuing a higher education went from 70 to four because without Pell and TAP grants, inmates could no longer afford the program. This is despite evidence that higher education has been a proven method of reducing recidivism and saving the taxpayer significant resources. One study found that inmates who participate in correctional education programs were 43 percent less likely to recidivate.ⁱⁱⁱ

That’s why Young Invincibles recommends the New York City Council:

1. Pass Resolution 0837-2015, sponsored by Chairwoman Inez Barron, which supports the Second Chance Pell Grant Program.
2. Pass a resolution urging the New York State Legislature and Governor to once again extend TAP grants to incarcerated residents.

Young Invincibles looks forward to working with the New York City Council to expand economic opportunity to all of New York’s young people including those who sometimes need a second chance. Thank you.

ⁱ Karpowitz, Daniel, and Max Kenner. Education as Crime Prevention: The Case for Reinstating Pell Grant Eligibility for the Incarcerated. Annandale-on Hudson, NY: Bard Prison Initiative. Page 3.

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/continuingstudies/distance/documents/educationascrimepreventionthecaseforreinstatingthepellgrantforoffenderskarpowitzandkenner.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ NY Governor Andrew Cuomo. Governor Cuomo Launches New Initiative to Provide College Classes in New York Prisons. February 16, 2014.

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-launches-initiative-provide-college-classes-new-york-prison>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Davis, Lois M., Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders and Jeremy N. V. Miles. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.



**Testimony of Suri Duitch
University Dean for Continuing Education and Workforce Development, and
Deputy to the Senior University Dean for Academic Affairs**

**Before the
New York City Council Higher Education Committee**

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Thank you for the invitation to testify today on this important topic. CUNY is tremendously supportive of the Council's intentions to increase access to higher education for individuals who are currently or formerly involved with the criminal justice system. Our Chancellor, James B. Milliken, has a particular interest in this population and has publicly expressed strong support for the U.S. Department of Education's plans to offer Pell grants to individuals in prison on a pilot basis.

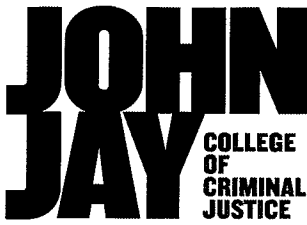
The University demonstrates its commitment to the formerly incarcerated through our support of prisoner reentry programs, particularly those at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, including the Prison-to-College Pipeline and the College Initiative. We show it through our support for a range of programs serving individuals who are criminal justice-involved, including the recently launched "CUNY Next Steps" program, offered in a detention facility on Rikers Island, which incorporates computer skills, vocational training, a cognitive behavioral intervention, and post-detention counseling in a partnership between LaGuardia Community College, Hostos Community College, STRIVE and the New York Public Library. And we demonstrate our commitment by avoiding and working to diminish structural impediments to college for the formerly incarcerated – CUNY, for example, has never asked questions about criminal records on admissions forms.

We do this because it is part of our mission as a great urban public university, because we understand the huge impact that higher education has on reducing recidivism and know that it is in

the interest of the City to ensure that the formerly incarcerated have access to high quality and affordable postsecondary education, and because supporting those who are working hard to improve themselves and their life prospects is simply the right thing to do.

As I stated earlier, we are greatly encouraged by the move to re-open access to Pell grants for the incarcerated, and are hopeful that this and other, similar efforts will follow as part of the nation's reconsideration of mass incarceration policies. John Jay's work in prisons has been privately funded, as my colleagues will describe, and therefore limited in scale and scope. We know that offering programs inside of facilities is a key component of a strong prison to college pipeline. And we look forward to working with you to help bring this about.

I will now introduce my fellow panel members, Ann Jacobs and Bianca Vanheydoorn from the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Devon Simmons, a student at Hostos Community College and a participant in the Prison-to-College Pipeline.



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**Testimony of Devon Simmons
Student, Hostos Community College, CUNY
Prison-to-College Pipeline, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY
Before the New York City Council Higher Education Committee**

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Good morning,

My name is Devon Simmons and I am a student of John Jay's Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP). Currently, I am enrolled at Hostos Community College, where I will graduate this spring with an Associate's degree in criminal justice.

My pursuit of higher education began 15 yrs ago after obtaining my GED in prison. I was eager to continue thriving academically. Unfortunately, because of the lack of financial aid for people in prison, my options to attend college were limited and my dreams were put on hold.

Twelve years later, the opportunity finally presented itself when I was transferred to Otisville Correctional Facility and my life changed dramatically. After passing the CUNY assessment test, I was accepted into the P2CP.

As a student in the program, I took introductory college courses, attended workshops and participated in monthly student learning exchanges with students from John Jay who traveled to Otisville. These learning exchanges were essential because they allowed those of us on the inside to connect with our peers from the campus and ultimately build community.

Cumulatively, these three facets contributed immensely to my success academically, but more importantly towards my reentry to society. Upon my release, I immediately enrolled in school and maintain a 3.78 GPA. I would not have been able to accomplish any of these goals without the assistance of P2CP and College Initiative.

The networks and resources created as a result of being a part of this community have been monumental for me and allowed me to reintegrate into society positively. Although the transition is not easy, knowing that I have supporters who are simply a phone call away has made all the difference. Whether it has been issues with school, housing or employment opportunities, all the assistance has been progressive.

I am now a peer mentor for College Initiative and a student success leader for Strive for Success at Hostos where I assist first year students integrate on campus. This is important to me because it allows me to give back to the community by helping individuals who are in need just as I was and to highlight how education is paramount. Likewise, I emphasize the importance of them finishing school which will deter them from resulting to a life of crime or relying on public assistance.

Moreover, my job allows me to intermingle with young men and women who I can learn from and share ideas with in regards to changing public policy. Thus, advocating the importance of rehabilitation which can be accomplished by education. All of this is due to the preparation I received as a result of having access to higher education through the Prison-to-College Pipeline. As you can imagine, I fully support bringing financial aid eligibility back for people in prison.

I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to present to you today.

**Testimony of Bianca van Heydoorn
Director of Educational Initiatives, Prisoner Reentry Institute
John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY**

Before the New York City Council Higher Education Committee

Tuesday, September 22, 2015

Thank you for the invitation to testify today. In my role as PRI's Director of Educational Initiatives, I am responsible for overseeing a continuum of services that are exclusively dedicated to increasing access to college for men and women with criminal justice involvement. As an example, I would like to highlight two components of our work in particular: The Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP) and College Initiative (CI). Together, they create a PRI continuum of services that start in prison and continue into the community and whose purpose is to increase the number of people who have access to higher education and who succeed there.

The Prison-to-College Pipeline (P2CP), founded in 2011 marked CUNY's return to offering college in prison in the decades since Pell grant funding was eliminated for incarcerated students. As the name suggests, the program is designed as a reentry initiative. Students begin their studies while they are still incarcerated and are fully matriculated CUNY students who earn credits for a period of between one and five years before they are released from prison. Students who maintain at least a C average in the program are guaranteed a seat in a CUNY institution upon release. The curriculum inside mirrors a freshman year of academic study. Students take introductory level courses including sociology, English, anthropology and history. This semester, they are taking courses in gender studies, criminology and public health.

The students routinely receive recognition from CUNY for their overall grade point averages and exceptional writing. Our students are regularly invited to join the honors society and every year since 2011, at least one Prison-to-College Pipeline student has had his work published in the college's literary journal—John Jay's Finest. I point to these two markers of their achievement because neither the journal editors nor the selection committee for the honors society are aware that the students are incarcerated.

Once a month we host a Learning Exchange where students from the community travel to the prison to take a blended class with the students inside. Through our Learning Exchanges, we work to dispel myths about who is in prison, build a community of peers between our students in prison and those from our campus, many of whom are studying to become criminal justice professionals. Our experience shows us that incarcerated students are among the most motivated, studious and dedicated learners we have come across and beginning the journey of higher education while in prison allows us to harness that motivation

and plant seeds that will bear fruit across generations. The experience has proven to be life altering for the community students as well, frequently changing their understanding of incarceration and their career aspirations.

We take an approach that recognizes the transformative value of higher education as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by the reentry experience. The P2CP model provides a rigorous liberal arts education, assistance with reentry planning, and social service supports when they are released. Our students leave prison with a minimum of 12 credits that are immediately transferrable to any CUNY institution, access to a team of caring reentry providers, supportive faculty contacts, and dedicated academic counselors to help them make a successful transition to CUNY in the community.

On July 1 of this year, a program called the College Initiative was integrated into the Educational Initiatives of the Prisoner Reentry Institute, making it an official CUNY program. CI responds to close to 1,000 letters of inquiry from men and women in prison annually and provides academic counseling to people who have been released. Our staff maintains those pivotal important relationships with key people on CUNY campuses to aid our students with enrollment and financial aid, and we make referrals to supportive services for people who need housing, medical care, employment and the whole range of things involved in constructing a life on the outside. Perhaps most importantly, we provide peer mentoring, and engage students in a growing and positive community of college students and graduates who are invested in their success. To see the impact of being there to provide encouragement and support to formerly incarcerated students, all you have to do is come to the yearly College Initiative graduation in June and listen to the students who are earning their degrees.

We are clear about the value of this continuum of educational and support services that starts in prison and continues into the community. It shows up clearly in the GPAs, retention and graduation of our students. The CUNY proposal to the Department of Education for the Second Chance Pell waiver would expand our program from enrollment of 20 at Otisville to enrollment of over 200 students at Otisville and Queensboro through a collaboration of John Jay, Hostos and LaGuardia community colleges. The Experimental Sites Initiative is an important step in the right direction. We also continue to advocate for the full restoration of financial aid for incarcerated students, which includes restoring New York State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). But restoration of student financial aid alone will not be sufficient unless there is also funding for the crucial community based services that I have described to you.

I am happy to share more about our model and programming but the true testament to the value of higher education and the impact of funding college-in-prison programs comes from those with direct experience. The Council will now hear testimony from a remarkable student about his journey to and through college. I introduce you to Devon Simmons.



**TESTIMONY
OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
REGARDING ITS
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION'S
"SECOND CHANCE PELL PILOT PROGRAM"
New York, N.Y.
September 22, 2014**

Good afternoon, my name is Farouk Abdallah and I am the Deputy Director of the New York Public Interest Research Group, NYPIRG. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the Resolution in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program.

NYPIRG is the state's largest student directed non-partisan research and advocacy organization. Our board of directors consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters from across the state.

Recently, the Obama Administration took a step to try to deal with one of the nation's most intractable problems: how to reduce the recidivism rate of those released from prisons. There are approximately 1.5 million people in state or federal prisons.¹ Those prisoners are serving time because they have been convicted of a serious crime. But the question is – what happens when their time is up and they are released back into our communities?

The statistics are grim: Despite prisons being called "correctional facilities," they do a dismal job in turning lives around. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nationwide about two-thirds of released state prisoners were re-arrested within three years and three-quarters within five.² Too often, prison is a revolving door.

And it's a revolving door that impacts certain communities worse than others. According to the Cuomo Administration, nearly half of New York inmate population is African American, nearly one quarter is Hispanic, and nearly one quarter is white.³

The revolving door too often sends recently-discharged inmates into communities in which they will commit a future crime. As a result, neighborhoods are less safe and people's lives are too often ruined. The currently high recidivism rate helps no one, so what should be done?

NYPIRG SUPPORTS RESOLUTION, PAGE 2

The Obama Administration recently unveiled a pilot program that will allow Pell Grants to be issued to a small number of colleges to offer college courses to eligible inmates. While prisoners can sometimes get access to educational courses now, they are ineligible for the federal Pell Grant program as well as the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). Since the vast majority of inmates are low income, they usually cannot afford college courses while in prison.

Why offer college classes to prisoners? The connection between higher education and reduced recidivism has been well established. In one study, individuals who earned an Associate's degree were 62 percent less likely to return to prison than those who did not.⁴

A study conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles found that "[a] \$1 million investment in incarceration will prevent about 350 crimes, while that same investment in education will prevent more than 600 crimes. Correctional education is almost twice as cost effective as incarceration."⁵

Thus, the Obama Administration's plan. The reason that it is a pilot program is that under a twenty year old law, the Congress prohibited Pell Grants for prisoners. The President's pilot program is allowed, according to the Administration, because of a provision in the Higher Education Act that allows the Education Department to study the effectiveness of a student-aid program without approval from Congress.

Similar efforts have been unsuccessful in New York State. Earlier this year, the Cuomo Administration urged passage of an initiative to give incarcerated individuals the opportunity to earn a college degree through funding college classes in prisons across New York. That plan failed.

Not surprisingly, there has been opposition to these types of reforms. Some in Congress argue that the Administration is operating outside of the law. Others – both at the national and statewide levels – argue that it is not right for prisoners to get financial aid, when the cost of going to college is skyrocketing which has led to a trillion dollar college debt.

To an extent, they have a point. In New York State, while the governor offered his own plan to help incarcerated individuals take college classes, his Administration has been advancing plans to annually hike tuition – thus driving up the cost of going to college for all.

But this hearing is not really about how to keep college affordable, it's about how our society treats those behind bars. It is obvious that the current approach has not worked. Punishment alone will not reduce the nation's recidivism rate. However, providing inmates with a path that leads to education, independence and security, thus making them productive members of our communities, will not only reduce recidivism, but help lead to a safer, more productive society.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for us to share our thoughts on the Resolution in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program. NYPIRG urges your support for this resolution.

NYPIRG SUPPORTS RESOLUTION, PAGE 3

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Prisoners in 2014," September, 2015, see: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p14_Summary.pdf.

² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "3 In 4 Former Prisoners In 30 States Arrested Within 5 Years Of Release," April 22, 2014, see: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/rprts05p0510pr.cfm>.

³ New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, "Under Custody Report: Profile of Inmate Population Under Custody on January 1, 2013," see:

http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Research/Reports/2013/UnderCustody_Report_2013.pdf.

⁴ City University of New York, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, "NYS Prison to College Pipeline," see: <http://johnjayresearch.org/pri/projects/nys-prison-to-college-pipeline/>.

⁵ Audrey Bazos and Jessica Hausman, UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research Department of Policy Studies, "Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program," p 2, March 2004, see: <http://www.ceanational.org/PDFs/ed-as-crime-control.pdf>.



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**TESTIMONY OF
THE FORTUNE SOCIETY**

Committee on Higher Education

RE: Res. No. - Resolution in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program, which will initiate new models to allow incarcerated individuals to receive Pell Grants to finance their education.

Oversight: Higher Education Access for Incarcerated and Recently Incarcerated Individuals

September 22, 2015

Presented by: Ronald F. Day

My name is Ronald Day and I am the Associate Vice President of The Fortune Society's David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy. I want to thank the City Council for allowing me to testify today about the critical and urgent need to reinstate Pell and Tap Grants in prisons.

As many of you know, Pell Grants provide vital funding for low-income individuals seeking a college education. Pell Grants are NOT first-come/first-served – anyone who meets the needs-based grant criteria is eligible to receive one. This included incarcerated people seeking to complete their Bachelor's degree until 1994, when Congress abruptly banned people in prisons from benefiting from Pell Grants. Literally overnight, incarcerated people who were making significant strides toward earning degrees that could support them in making a successful transition saw these educational programs VANISH.

This audience is knowledgeable about the transformative power of education. Numerous studies, including ones commissioned by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the Rand Corporation have established that correctional education reduces post-release recidivism and does so in a highly cost-effective manner. It has also been found that the likelihood of securing gainful employment increases significantly for those who benefited from the college experience.

Funding college prison programs through Pell grants are indisputably a cost-effective means of reducing recidivism and achieving public safety. But they do something else – something equally significant. They send a message that America is ready to acknowledge that its historically punitive, restrictive, and non-rehabilitative approach to incarceration is antiquated and ineffective. Reinstating Pell (and Tap grants

for that matter) sends the message that we, as a society, are willing to own the failures of our public school system, and demonstrate that we truly believe in Second Chances. Moreover, college prison programs is one small but significant step in stopping the “revolving door” that so many criminal justice-involved individuals go through when they reenter society with little-to-no-education or marketable skills.

People make bad choices, politicians are people, therefore politicians make bad choices too. I remember the day in 1994 when that bad choice resonated through the prison system. I remember vividly because my educational odyssey began in prison. I entered the system with only a GED, but enrolled in college almost immediately after arriving at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. I was able to earn fifty-one college credits before the funding was cut, but it was disheartening to know that the rug had been snatched out from under me and others. However, my desire and commitment to earn a college degree never waned. Since my release eight years ago, I completed my Bachelor’s in Science degree, graduated with a Master’s Degree with Honors, and am now a fourth year criminal justice doctoral student. And I taught for six semesters in the Master’s in Public Administration program at John Jay. I fret to think how different my life would be without education.

At the Fortune Society, I interact regularly with people who did not have access to higher education while incarcerated struggle now to catch up. Their *desire* to achieve and thoroughly reintegrate into society is tremendous. However, their ability to focus on higher education when there are so many competing priorities often makes the process particularly challenging. Pell Grant programs in prison are an established, cost-effective, and tested means of preparing people returning to society for the demands of maintaining

a crime-free, productive life. Even though it was taken away from me twenty-one years ago, I know that my own experience as a Pell Grant beneficiary set me on the career path where I stand today.

Once again, I want to thank the City Council for allowing me testify today, and I urge you to please advocate for the reinstatement of Pell and Tap grants in prisons.



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Testimony Submitted by Dionna King

Community Organizer: Education From the Inside Out

As the organizer for the Education from The Inside Out Coalition I hear many stories from people who are incarcerated, have returned home, or have family members who are directly impacted by the criminal justice system. Their stories resonate with me as they are deeply connected to my own story. My brother was first incarcerated at the age of 18. Our school administration discovered a small amount of marijuana in his high school locker. They swiftly detained him and I found him sitting in the principal's office looking forlorn; waiting for the officers to take him away. A German Shepherd with a keen nose and a routine sweep of the hallways disrupted his life forever, beginning a cycle of incarceration that lasted for a decade. This is my story, but it is hardly original. Thousands of young people have cycled into the school-to-prison pipeline. Few find their way back to education as they stop being children and become criminals in the eyes of the state. My story led me to the Education from the Inside Out Coalition, where I work to advocate for the removal of barriers to higher education for individuals who are incarcerated and those who have come home.

The decision to ban Pell Grant eligibility to incarcerated individuals was mired in political theater that placed incarcerated students at odds with the low-income and middle class traditional students. Proponents of the ban argued that giving Pell grants to incarcerated people created suffering for law-abiding, middle class families who struggled to afford college at a time when tuition prices were increasing. Senator Jessie Helms falsely argued that incarcerated students drained \$200 million dollars in funding from the Pell grant programs. Other legislators went further to argue that many incarcerated students cheated in class and only participated in post-secondary college education programs to get time off of their sentence. They saw incarcerated people as irredeemable, beyond rehabilitation, and only deserving of deprivation and harsh punishment.

Despite the evidence that proves that participation in post-secondary college education significantly reduces recidivism upon release, increases employment opportunities, makes conditions safer and more manageable for the individuals working in correctional facilities and increases public safety as a whole Pell grant eligibility was denied to incarcerated students. Legislators in New York swiftly followed suit and banned TAP grants for incarcerated students in 1995.



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EDUCATION FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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The tough on crime era is ending and legislators from both the Republican and Democratic Party are now shifting their message to 'Smart on Crime'. The creation of the Second Chance Pilot Pell Program is a tremendous start and it's befitting of the New York City Council to applaud this bold, administrative action. But, the New York City Council must go beyond applause and demand that NYS legislators reinstate tuition assistance programs for incarcerated New Yorkers.

As much as I wish to celebrate this moment I am reminded that New York State legislators have continued to undermine efforts to fund in-prison college programs. The same rhetoric that was used to pull Pell funding continues to proliferate in New York State. Instead of taking a lead in correcting this issue New York State legislators cowered and capitulated to biased public opinion; placing political capital over public safety. A New York State Congressman introduced the Kids before Cons Act in response to the Obama Administration's pilot program, originally introduced when New York State legislators advocated against Cuomo's plan to provide funding for in-prison college programs last year. New York State lawmakers take these actions in defense of the idealized, moral, oft law-abiding taxpayer while devaluing the needs of moral, law-abiding, tax-paying families and communities impacted by the criminal justice system.

If this nation and this state want to reduce crime then they must remove barriers to education and successful re-entry. Congress must pass the Restoring Education and Learning Act and end the Ban on Pell, New York State must turn on the TAP and restore financial aid for incarcerated New Yorkers, and collectively we must end the discrimination and destroy the stigma that leaves returning citizens isolated and rejected from housing, employment and education.

Sharlene Henry, an EIO member and mother of 4 could not be here today to deliver her testimony. Ms. Henry was a student through the Bard Prison initiative. She found the program incredibly rewarding because she learned that she could succeed at an elite institution and compete academically with traditional students. This realization fomented feelings of self-worth and respect. She is now home, raising her family and encouraging her children to follow her path to education not incarceration. Providing education to incarcerated students not only changes the individual who receives it, it has the power to transform the lives of everyone they are connected to.

Today, I ask that the New York City Council do more than celebrate this moment.

I ask that the council use its influence to create a parallel moment for residents of this City and this State.



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**Testimony of
Geraldine Downey**

Director, Center for Justice
Professor of Psychology

and Eileen Gillooly

Executive Director, Heyman Center for the Humanities
Affiliate Faculty, English and Institute of Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality
Columbia University in the City of New York

**Resolution in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot
Program, which will initiate new models to allow incarcerated individuals to receive
Pell Grants to finance their education**

Oversight: Higher Education Access for Incarcerated and Recently Incarcerated
Individuals

September 22, 2105

We would like to thank the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Pilot Program and the possibilities it promises to increase access to higher education for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Every significant study shows that education dramatically reduces recidivism. Those who leave prison with a college degree are much more likely to gain employment and contribute to the support of their families, as well as to become role models for their children (and more than 50% of incarcerated people have children). Indeed, many who begin higher education in prison are inspired to continue their education on the outside, often completing unfinished undergraduate degrees or pursuing masters and

doctorates. Tertiary education also dramatically increases the safety of prisons for all those inside. And, perhaps most importantly, it fosters the potential among those who have been incarcerated to become leaders in bringing about positive change on behalf of their communities.

The Center for Justice and the Heyman Center for the Humanities recently received a three-year, \$1M grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of the Justice-in-Education Initiative: a joint effort of these Columbia University centers to provide education to the incarcerated and the formerly incarcerated. Since spring 2015, when the award was announced, we have begun to send Columbia faculty to teach in local prisons. By the end of the 2015-16 academic year, we anticipate that approximately twenty Columbia-affiliated faculty and graduate students will have taught college-accredited classes in behavioral sciences, language study, psychology, drama, humanities, and anthropology at Taconic and Sing Sing Correctional Facilities. By the end of the three-year grant period, we expect that number to rise to more than fifty. We have also created a gateway humanities course, modeled on Columbia's famed Core Curriculum, which this past summer was completed by a select group of formerly incarcerated individuals, named Justice-in-Education Scholars. This course is part of the standard undergraduate curriculum and will be offered to both Columbia undergraduates and a new cohort of Justice-in-Education Scholars in Spring 2016 (and at least once annually in future years). The half dozen Justice-in-Education Scholars who took the course this past summer are now all either enrolled in four-colleges or are applying to do so (with the support of the Double Discovery Program at Columbia University). Two of these scholars are now working for the Justice-in-Education Initiative and studying at Columbia. (Some of our efforts were recently covered in *The Record*, the official Columbia University publication, and can be found here: <http://news.columbia.edu/justiceed>.)

Our goal in developing the Justice-in-Education Initiative is not only to make higher education available to a group that has been effectively excluded from it, but also to develop Columbia collaborations with community organizations and other universities in our efforts to do so. Many New Yorkers who have returned from prison are playing leadership roles in supporting the successful reentry of others. We consider the participation of these partners as vital to our work, visiting Columbia classes, providing input on curriculum development, guest lecturing, and actively contributing to scholarship.

We also consider it the obligation of the University to address the issue of mass incarceration. By considering the multiple social, political, and ethical issues that mass incarceration raises from different perspectives and approaches, we seek to prepare Columbia students to foster a more equitable, less racially-based system of legal justice in their future careers as lawyers, educators, policy makers, researchers, and as citizens. In adopting an apprenticeship model whereby doctoral students assist seasoned teachers in the prison classroom, graduate students are given the opportunity to explore teaching in prison as a possible career path. Beginning in Spring 2016, we intend to provide opportunities to Columbia students to take classes inside prisons along with students who are incarcerated – as we know that such mixed population courses can be transformative for students from both institutions.

The groundswell of support for the Justice-in-Education Initiative has been extraordinary and inspiring. Enthusiasm is virtually palpable among Columbia faculty, students, and administrators--from the arts and humanities to the social and health sciences to social work and law. We believe that such passion reflects a growing awareness of the centrality of “justice issues” across the disciplines. Reimagining justice is the kind of grand societal challenge identified in the *Heart of the Matter*, the much-cited report by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences – a challenge to which the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts are uniquely equipped to contribute. We also believe that the collaborative partnership we have formed – two University centers working in tandem with others that have led the call for change in the justice system (e.g., Hudson Link, the Prison-to-College Pipeline, the Vera Institute, the Correctional Association, the Clemente Course administered by Bard College) – responds to the urging of that report to take knowledge-generation out of “academic self-enclosure and connect . . . it to the world” (43). Universities have had very few mechanisms for connecting community and university-based initiatives to achieve justice goals. The Justice-in-Education Initiative offers one model for building partnerships with community members and organizations to extend education to the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated.

The financial support provided by the restitution of Pell Grants for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals would dramatically increase the ability of our Initiative and others like them at other institutions of higher education to educate this underserved population. While private funding has made our programs possible, such programs have necessarily reached only a limited number of individuals who would benefit greatly by them. Many of us (at CUNY, Cornell, Vassar, and elsewhere) are exploring ways to coordinate our efforts to educate incarcerated individuals. Pell

Grants would make our collective degree-granting in New York prisons significantly easier.

We want to thank you all for your time as well as your attention to this critically important matter. We look forward to working together as the Council continues to engage the issues of educating incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

Name: Kevin Nunez (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 350 Jant Annis Avenue

I represent: University Student Senate

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

Name: GARY SASSOIS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2534 PRISON AVE

I represent: SLUSA

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Jacqueline Thompson (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 475 Riverside Drive

I represent: College & Community Fellowship

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francis Torres

Address: Exec. Director Educational

I represent: Services

Address: DOC

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: WINETTE SAUNDERS - Dep. Com. for Youthful
offender
Programs

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOC

Address: 75-20 ASTORIA BLVD

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Cronin, General Counsel

Address: 1 Centre St.

I represent: Mayor's office of Criminal Justice

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Oscar Martinez

Address: 1204 W 106th Street

I represent: University Student Senate

Address: West 57th Street New York, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9-22-15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Khalil Cumberbatch

Address: 225 Varick Street

I represent: Legal Action Center

Address: 225 Varick Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Johnny Perez

Address: 40 Rector St., New York NY 10006

I represent: URBAN JUSTICE CENTER

Address: 40 RECTOR ST. 9th FL. N.Y. NY 10006

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Kevin Stump (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Young Invincibles

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: SEPT 22, 15

Name: RAUL BAEZ (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 205-06 48TH AVE BAYSIDE NY

I represent: WITO INC / EFO COALITION

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Lucas Almonte (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 73 Ellwood Street APT 1B, NY NY 10040

I represent: University Student Senate

Address: 583 W 57th Street Suite 1410 NY, NY 10019

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 9.22.15

Name: GIANNINA KING (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: Education from the Inside Out Coalition

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: FAROUK ABDALLAH (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 7219 5th Ave

I represent: NYPICG

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

Name: CLAUDIA WALD (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 6134 GATES AVE Ridgewood NY 11385

I represent: Univ. Student Senate - CUNY

Address: 555 West 57th Street NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ronald F. Day

Address: 29-76 Northern Blvd

I represent: The Fortune Society

Address: same as above

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANN JACOBS, JOHN JAY COLLEGE

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BIANCA VANHEYDOORN

Address: JOHN JAY COLLEGE

I represent: ANN JACOBS

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: DEVON SIMMONS (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: STUDENT JOHN JAY

I represent: _____

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card



I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

CUNY

Date: _____

Name: SURI DUTCH, UNIVERSITY DEAN (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/22/15

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gabi Starr

Address: NYU, College of Arts & Sciences

I represent: NYU

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 837 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cynthia Conti-Cook

Address: Legal Aid Society

I represent: 199 Water St 6th

Address: NY NY 10038

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