



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 126

Resolution calling upon the federal, state, and city governments to reallocate spending and resources to specifically earmark funding for higher education and elementary and secondary schooling in order to fight the growing societal trend of young African-American men going to prison rather than attending universities or colleges, and seek to accomplish such reallocation by increasing spending on higher education and elementary and secondary schooling, and decreasing the funding for prison construction and related expenditures.

By Council Members Barron, Clarke, Comrie, Dilan, Gerson, Jackson, Lopez, Perkins, Seabrook, Vann, Boyland, Foster, James, Martinez, Monserrate and Stewart

Whereas, According to a report issued by the Justice Policy Institute entitled *Cellblocks or Classrooms?: The Funding of Higher Education and Corrections and Its Impact on African-American Men* (the "Report"), the proportion of all state spending for higher education from general funds declined from 70% in 1985 to 53% in 2000; and

Whereas, An analysis of state and local spending on higher education and corrections contained in the Report indicated that from the 1950s to 1980, the share of state and local spending on colleges and universities more than doubled from 3.5% in 1952 to 8.0% in 1980, while the percentage of spending on corrections remained essentially the same, with a slight increase from 1.5% in 1952 to 2.1% in 1980; and

Whereas, According to the Report, starting in the 1980s, policymakers chose to respond to public concerns about crime by focusing more resources to house and incarcerate a much larger prison population than existed historically, and between 1980 and 2000, the prison population quadrupled from 500,000 to 2 million prisoners; and

Whereas, By the year 2000, the Report found that the cost of incarcerating these 2 million prisoners caused a 104% increase in state and local spending for corrections facilities and services; and

Whereas, During that same period of time, higher education's share of all state and local spending dropped nearly 23% by the year 2000; and

Whereas, During that same time period, New York State experienced substantial declines in the amount of constant dollars (dollars adjusted to remove the effects of inflation) spent from its general fund for higher education, while experiencing significant increases in prison spending; and

Whereas, Tuition and fee support for higher education also has risen at eight times the rate of state support, thereby shifting a large portion of the costs of an education to students and unduly burdening students from low-and-middle income families; and

Whereas, America's burgeoning prison system has been fueled by the incarceration of non-Whites, particularly African-American men, such that a study by the national Center on Institutions and Alternatives found that between 1985 and 1997, 70% of prison growth came from the addition of new African-American and Latino prisoners with an estimated 16% of that population being Latino; and

Whereas, Data gathered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that close to one million of the two million people incarcerated in the United States are of African-American descent; and

Whereas, The Bureau of Justice Statistics study evidences that an African-American man born in the 1990s has a 1 in 4 chance of spending some time in prison during his lifetime, and other national studies have shown that more than half of the young African-American men in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland are in prison, jail or on probation; and

Whereas, A study entitled *New York State of Mind: Higher Education vs. Corrections in the Empire State, 1988-1998* reveals that in New York State in 1998, there were more African-American and Latino men in prisons upstate than were graduating from state colleges and universities; and

Whereas, According to the Justice Policy Institute Report, in the year 2000, there were approximately 791,600 African-American men under the jurisdiction of state and federal prison systems and in local jails, while during that same year, there were 603,032 African-American men enrolled in higher education, which

means that there were 188,500 more African-American men incarcerated than in higher education at the turn of the 21st century; and

Whereas, The Report also indicated that over the past 15 years, unlike the white population, the growth in black male imprisonment has greatly outpaced the growth in black male college enrollment, mirroring the increased funding for imprisonment, rather than for higher education; and

Whereas, According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics from 1980 to 2000, the number of Americans of all races attending colleges and universities rose to 14.8 million from 12.1 million, an increase of 22%; and

Whereas, In a news report in *The New York Times* dated August 28, 2002, Professor Todd Clear of the City University of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice stated that the findings in the Report issued by the Justice Policy Institute are still significant because they reveal that with respect to African-American men, "there has been a public policy far overemphasizing investment in criminal justice instead of in education for this population;" and

Whereas, According to Professor Clear, these findings also "tell you that the life chances of a black male going to prison is greater today than the chances of a black male going to college, and it wasn't always this way;" and

Whereas, Experts in the educational field have highlighted that given the difficult economic times ahead, this nation must rethink its education policy and prioritize funding to responsibly reduce reliance on expensive prisons so that institutions of higher learning and elementary and secondary schooling are not bankrupted; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the federal, state, and city governments to reallocate spending and resources to specifically earmark funding for higher education and elementary and secondary schooling in order to fight the growing societal trend of young African-American men going to prison rather than attending universities or colleges, and seek to accomplish such reallocation by increasing spending on higher education and elementary and secondary schooling, and decreasing the funding

for prison construction and related expenditures.