



# LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS

## To Reduce Crime & Incarceration

### Briefing Memo: PELL GRANT RESTORATION

As part of our continued commitment to promote sensible criminal justice reform and reduce recidivism, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration supports the restoration of Pell Grant funding to incarcerated individuals. With decades of collective experience, we believe that higher education in prisons is one of the most effective ways to combat recidivism. We support access to in-prison educational opportunities for many reasons:

#### Public Safety

- Over two-thirds of people who are released from prison are rearrested within three years and more than 75 percent of people are rearrested within six years.<sup>1</sup>
- According to peer reviewed studies, participating in education programs while incarcerated reduces an individual's likelihood of recidivating by 43 percent.<sup>2</sup>

#### Effective Reentry

- At least 95 percent of incarcerated people will eventually return to their communities from prison, including over 600,000 individuals each year.<sup>3</sup>
- There are significant economic barriers to reentry, such as employment, housing, and a supportive social network, causing many to revert to violating the law.
- Postsecondary education helps equip incarcerated individuals with the skills necessary in our modern economy, increasing their economic potential and improving their ability to successfully reenter society.<sup>4</sup>
- Stable high-quality employment decreases an individual's likelihood of recidivating.<sup>5</sup>

#### Prison Safety & Prison Culture

- Prisons that are rampant with gangs, drugs, and violence put prisoners and correctional staff at risk.<sup>6</sup>
- Postsecondary education in prisons can improve safety within prisons by incentivizing good behavior and self-improvement.<sup>7</sup>
  - Good behavior is typically a requirement of participating in educational programming.
- Education programs make corrections jobs safer by providing a structured routine for incarcerated people.

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<sup>1</sup> MARIEL ALPER, MATTHEW R. DUROSE & JOSHUA MARKMAN, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, 2018 UPDATE ON PRISONER RECIDIVISM: A 9-YEAR FOLLOW-UP PERIOD (2005-2014) 1 (2018), <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6266>.

<sup>2</sup> See generally LOIS M. DAVIS ET AL., RAND CORP., EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION: A META-ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE EDUCATION TO INCARCERATED ADULTS 57 (2013), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR266.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR266.html).

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., JENNIFER BRONSON & E. ANN CARSON, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, PRISONERS IN 2017 11 (April 2019), <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p17.pdf> (detailing that in 2016, 626,019 individuals were released from prison including 52,035 who were released from federal custody, and that in 2017, 622,377 individuals were released from prison including 49,461 who were released from federal custody).

<sup>4</sup> See generally Daniel Shoag & Stan Veuger, *The Economics of Prisoner Reentry*, in EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION 31–40 (Gerard Robinson & Elizabeth English Smith eds., Rowman & Littlefield 2019); ANTHONY P. CARNEVALE ET AL., THE CENTURY FOUNDATION, EDUCATIONAL ADEQUACY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 2 (2018), [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/TCF\\_EducationalAdequacyReport.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/TCF_EducationalAdequacyReport.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See Jennifer Doleac, *Can Employment-Focused Programs Reduce Recarceration Rates?*, ECONOFACT (Jun. 29, 2018), <https://econofact.org/can-employment-focused-reentry-programs-keep-former-prisoners-from-being-reincarcerated>; Anke Ramakers et al., *Not Just Any Job Will Do: A Study on Employment Characteristics and Recidivism Risks After Release*, 61 INT'L JOURNAL OF OFFENDER THERAPY AND COMPARATIVE CRIMINOLOGY 1795, 1796–1814 (2016), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5669259/>.

<sup>6</sup> See generally Newt Gingrich & Van Jones, *Forward to EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION*, *supra* note 4, at vii.

<sup>7</sup> See Karen F. Lahm, *Educational Participation and Inmate Misconduct*, 48 J. OF OFFENDER REHABILITATION 37, 47–49 (2009), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509670802572235?journalCode=wjor20>.

- Individuals who are serving a life sentence wield significant influence over prison culture and, through rehabilitation, they can positively influence their peers and help create a safer prison environment.

### **Purpose of Prison**

- To be effective, prisons should be rehabilitative, but an overly punitive culture has caused prisons to become criminogenic.
- A recent poll found that 92% of Democrats and 79% of Republicans agree that the criminal justice system should be rehabilitative and should be preparing individuals to successfully reenter their communities.<sup>8</sup>

### **Wasted Tax Dollars**

- States and the federal government spend billions of dollars annually to maintain prison populations.<sup>9</sup>
- Incarceration costs are compounded by the high costs of reincarceration.
- The data suggest that every dollar spent on prison education saves four to five dollars by reducing reincarceration due to recidivism.<sup>10</sup>
- Expanding Pell grant eligibility to incarcerated individuals could save states as much as \$365.8 million a year in incarceration costs if 50 percent of the Pell-eligible individuals participated in post-secondary education.<sup>11</sup>

“Being truly tough on crime is preventing it from happening in the first place or happening again. Preventing recidivism is tough and we need to get smart on being tough on crime. Reducing recidivism is key to public safety, and in-prison education is key to reducing recidivism.” – **Ronal Serpas, Former Police Superintendent, New Orleans, Louisiana**

“People are sent to prison as punishment, not to be punished when they get there. If we, as a society, want to be serious about reducing crime, we have to look at how time during incarceration can play a role in increasing success for second chances.” – **Rick Raemisch, Former Executive Director of Colorado Department of Corrections**

“Reentry planning should start on day one of incarceration. Education is a key foundational component to reducing recidivism, improving outcomes for those in the justice system and enhancing safety for our communities.” – **Peter J. Koutoujian, Sheriff, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

“I worked with a lot of survivors of violence and sex crimes as a federal prosecutor, and one of the things that gives many of them the courage to come forward and see a case through is the hope that they can prevent someone else from being hurt in the future. We need to provide defendants with appropriate opportunities for rehabilitation to reduce the possibility that they will reoffend upon release. We owe it to the victims.” – **Taryn Merkl, Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, Eastern District of New York**

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Law Enforcement Leaders unites nearly 200 current and former police chiefs, sheriffs, federal and state prosecutors, and attorneys general from all 50 states and across the political spectrum, who are committed to identifying and implementing solutions to simultaneously reduce crime and incarceration. With the goal of building a smarter, stronger, and fairer criminal justice system, our national coalition joined together in 2015 to develop smart solutions on crime and to change laws and practices in order to reduce recidivism and continue keeping our communities safe.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Blizzard, *Key Findings from a National Survey of 800 Registered Voters, January 11-14, 2018*, at 10, JUSTICE ACTION NETWORK (2018), <http://www.justiceactionnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/JAN-Poll-PPT-Jan25.2018.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> CHRIS MAI & RAM SUBRAMANIAN, VERA INST. OF JUSTICE, *THE PRICE OF PRISONS: EXAMINING STATE SPENDING TRENDS, 2010-2015* 7 (2017), <https://www.vera.org/publications/price-of-prisons-2015-state-spending-trends> (detailing that 45 states spent just under \$43 billion on prisons in 2015).

<sup>10</sup> DAVIS, *supra* note 2 at 59.

<sup>11</sup> PATRICK OAKFORD ET AL., VERA INST. OF JUSTICE, *INVESTING IN FUTURES: ECONOMIC AND FISCAL BENEFITS OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN PRISON* 50 (2019), <https://www.vera.org/publications/investing-in-futures-education-in-prison>.