

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/investing-in-futures-education-in-prison>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Efforts to build robust postsecondary education programs in prison have accelerated in recent years, with support from a broad range of groups from correctional officers to college administrators. This report, which is the result of a collaborative effort with the [Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality](#), describes how lifting the current ban on awarding Pell Grants to incarcerated people would benefit workers, employers, and states. Specifically, it analyzes the potential employment and earnings impact of postsecondary education programs in prison; identifies the millions of job openings annually that require the skills a person in prison could acquire through postsecondary education; and estimates the money states would save through lower recidivism rates these postsecondary education programs would yield.

Federal policymakers should right a past wrong by restoring eligibility for Pell Grants to all qualified incarcerated people, thus making the projections in this report of improved lives, a stronger workforce, and state fiscal savings a reality.

With greater access to education in prison, formerly incarcerated people would reenter the labor market with competitive skills and qualifications, leading to higher rates of employment and increased earnings.

Businesses in expanding industries subsequently would have a larger pool of potential job applicants, making it easier to grow and hire a trained workforce.

States would also benefit as a greater number of formerly incarcerated people likely would successfully reenter their communities rather than become re-involved with the criminal justice system.

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