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NYPIRG Statement on New York State's Investment of \$7.3 Million into College Courses for Incarcerated Individuals

Earning a college degree provides a clear path to successful reentry into society for individuals upon release from prison. NYPIRG applauds the Governor's decision to invest state money in college courses for incarcerated individuals in New York.

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 years. 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.

As the Governor points out, reducing recidivism rates is a win-win for public safety and formerly incarcerated individuals. According to John Jay's Prisoner Reentry Institute, inmates who earned an associate's degree were 62% less likely to return to prison.

Since the vast majority of inmates are low income, access to financial aid programs like the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and the new Excelsior Scholarship will ensure equality of access to this new initiative. 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."

College attainment for incarcerated individuals has guaranteed returns and must be accessible regardless of income. We look forward to seeing the details of the investment and call on New York State to expand TAP and Excelsior Scholarship eligibility to incarcerated individuals.