

RESTORE FUNDS FOR COLLEGE EDUCATION FOR THE INCARCERATED

WHEREAS, the U.S. has the highest documented rate of incarceration in the world, with more than 1.6 million people currently in state and federal prisons, and more than 700,000 additional people in local jails, representing an increase of 500 percent over the last thirty years [World Prison Population List, 2010; ACLU. "Race and Ethnicity in America: Turning a Blind Eye to Injustice." December 2007. <http://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/humanrights/cerd_full_report.pdf>.]; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, over 7.3 million people in the United States were under some form of correctional supervision, including probation, prison, jail, and parole [Bureau of Justice Statistics.]; and

WHEREAS, the prison and reentry population is disproportionately composed of people of color, including among juveniles; while people of color represent 15 percent of all American juveniles, they are 28 percent of those arrested nationwide and 58 percent of those sentenced to serve time in state prisons [ACLU. "Race and Ethnicity in America: Turning a Blind Eye to Injustice." December 2007. <http://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/humanrights/cerd_full_report.pdf>.]; and

WHEREAS, 70 percent of prisoners in the U.S. are people of color [State University of New York-Binghamton, "Resisting the Prison Industrial Complex." <<http://cpic.binghamton.edu/resisting.html>>.], a situation that amounts to mass incarceration with racially differential enforcement, often under the rubric of the war on drugs [Alexander, Michelle. The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. New York: New Press, 2010.]; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Congress passed Title IV of the Higher Education Act, permitting inmates to apply for Pell Grants to finance their college education, and by 1982, 350 college-in-prison programs were serving 27,000 students, funded in large part by Pell grants [Bureau of Justice Statistics.]; and

WHEREAS, prison education programs accounted for only one-tenth of one percent of the entire Pell program, a fraction so small that no other student, outside of the prison population, can have been denied a grant because of prisoner education services [Bureau of Justice Statistics.]; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which included an amendment to the Higher Education Act of 1965 and prohibited the awarding of Pell Grants to individuals in federal or state correctional facilities [National Criminal Justice Reference Service. U.S. Department of Justice Fact Sheet. "Violent Crime Control Law Enforcement Act of 1994." <<http://www.ncjrs.gov/txtfiles/billfs.txt>>.]; and

WHEREAS, state after state continues to reduce investment in education while expanding expenditures in correctional facilities. In 2007, states expanded their corrections budgets by an

average of 127 percent [Hermes, JJ. "5 States Spend More on Prisons Than on Colleges." Chronicle of Higher Education, 14 March 2008]; and

WHEREAS, correctional officials have documented the efficacy of college-in-prison and reentry programs because these programs provide an incentive for good behavior and morale, and provide opportunities for future employment [Gangi, R.; Schiraldi, V.; and Ziedenberg, J. "New York State of Mind? Higher Education vs. Prison Funding in the Empire State 1988-1998." Correctional Association of New York & Justice Policy Institute.

<http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/98-10_REP_NYStateofMind_BB.pdf>; Bazoz, A.; Hausman, J. "Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program." University of California at Los Angeles School of Public Policy and Social Research Department of Policy Studies. March 2004.]; and

WHEREAS, without education, high rates of recidivism and unemployment are likely to continue to plague former prisoners and drain the human and material resources of states and communities; and

WHEREAS, several college programs have persisted through the creative use of other federal grants, state appropriations, and /or private funding, and provide outstanding models of good practices [Correctional Association of New York. "Education from the Inside, Out: The Multiple Benefits of College Programs in Prison." January 2009.]; and

WHEREAS, because most of the approximately 600,000 inmates who currently return to communities each year from state and federal prisons have not completed high school and have limited employment skills, substantial in-prison and reentry college programs are both essential and cost-effective [Bureau of Justice Statics.]; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the American Federation of Teachers is to improve the lives of our members and their families, the quality of the services we provide to our students, and to promote democracy and social justice:

RESOLVED, that AFT advocate to have federal legislation introduced and passed to restore Pell grants for prisoners and ex-prisoners; and

RESOLVED, that AFT develop and disseminate educational materials to inform its members and their communities of the realities of the economic, social, and crime-reduction efficacy of college-in-prison and reentry programs; and

RESOLVED, that AFT develop written and electronic media to publicize its support of in-prison college and reentry college programs to members (Pre-K through 16, as well as healthcare and public employees) and make these available to neighborhood communities and students, through teach-ins, educational forums, and town hall meetings and hearings.