

Study: Illinois Has 230,000 Dropouts School Dropouts Commit 'Economic Suicide,' Researcher Says

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High school dropouts are committing "economic suicide" compared with those who stick it out, and will contribute \$221,000 less in tax money to society, according to a new analysis released Wednesday.

The report comes from a state task force charged with figuring out how to reduce the number of dropouts in Illinois. The group found earlier this year that there were nearly 230,000 dropouts in the state.

The task force wants more spending on dropout prevention programs, but didn't say where the cash-strapped state should get it. The five-year plan would

cost \$31 million in its first year and \$166 million in its fifth year. The goal is to graduate 11,000 former dropouts by its fifth year.

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Selina Martinez, 17, a Roosevelt High School dropout who later re-enrolled at Campos Alternative High School in the Humboldt Park neighborhood,

said teachers and counselors should work harder to encourage students to stay in school.

"They should try to reach the students more and talk to them," Martinez said.

Joe McLaughlin of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston, who analyzed the data, said dropouts commit "economic suicide" when they leave school. He said that on average, dropouts make hundreds of thousands of dollars less, pay less taxes, collect more unemployment and other government support and go to prison at higher rates than peers with a high school diploma.