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PRESS RELEASE
BLACK MALE DROPOUTS LEAD NATION IN INCARCERATION

New report released by national coalition demonstrates need for national dropout re-enrollment strategy

CHICAGO – On any given day, nearly 23 percent of all young Black men ages 16 to 24 who have dropped out of high school are in jail, prison, or a juvenile justice institution in America, according to a disturbing new national report released today on the dire economic and social consequences of not graduating from high school.

Dropouts become incarcerated at a shocking rate: 23 of every 100 young Black male dropouts were in jail on any given day in 2006-07 compared to only 6 to 7 of every 100 Asian, Hispanic or White dropouts. While young Black men are disproportionately affected, the report found that this crisis cuts across racial and ethnic lines. **Male dropouts of all races were 47 times more likely to be incarcerated than their peers of a similar age who had graduated from a four-year college or university.**

“For too long, and in too many ways, young people across the country have been let down by the education system and by the adults responsible for their care and development. Now is the time to increase the investments we make in young people, enhance the content, opportunities and supports we provide, and empower them to make better choices about both their individual future and the future of our nation. This report is another important step towards those ends,” said Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League.

Released today by a coalition of leading national and regional education, advocacy, and social service groups, the report, **Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers – 22% Daily Jailing Rate for Young Black Men Who Drop Out of High School** is available online at <http://www.clms.neu.edu>.

Professor Andrew Sum, Center for Labor Market Studies (CLMS), Northeastern University in Boston was commissioned by the Alternative Schools Network (ASN) in Chicago, to provide a detailed portrait of the employment, earnings and family income, incarceration and parenting experiences of dropouts, ages 16 to 24, compared to their better-educated peers. The report is based on an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau data from national Current Population Surveys and American Community Surveys in 2006-08.

“This timely and insightful report offers a critical account of the impact of dropouts on America's present and future. As America begins to consider the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) and shapes the unprecedented investment in education by the Obama administration, we must remember to take careful and thoughtful account of what is at stake,” said Jack Wuest, Executive Director, the ASN. “These statistics overwhelming make the case for a national education strategy that focuses on re-enrolling these young adults back into school and training programs that can lead to well-paying careers.”

This new report builds upon the groundbreaking findings of **Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis**, released earlier this year, which disclosed that nearly 6.2 million largely black and Hispanic youth have dropped out of high school and are living in America. This report, also released by the ASN in conjunction with other national education and civil rights organizations, documented the magnitude of America's dropout crisis.

Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing outlines the extremely difficult circumstances that these young people ages 16 to 24 face after dropping out of high school, and demonstrates the high price paid by both these young adults, American taxpayers and our society as a whole. In addition to their sharply higher rates of incarceration, the report showed that these young adults face very bleak economic prospects, which will make it difficult for them to change course and finance future schooling and training.

"This new report from the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University presents a vivid portrait of the growing economic peril the nation faces if it fails to reverse the rising tide of high school dropouts. The Chicago Urban League strongly endorses this report, and its call to action. High school dropouts face daunting obstacles that will bar them from entry into the labor market. The problem is most severe among African American males, who earn less and have an incarceration rate three times that of Asians and nearly four times that of Hispanics. The study also makes clear that young people who return to school can reverse these trends. The study clearly illustrates the case for quick federal action, and the need for increased capacity on the part of state agencies, non-profits and social service outlets to stave off this crisis," said Herman Brewer, Acting President and CEO, The Chicago Urban League.

DROPOUTS EXPERIENCE HIGH LEVELS OF JOBLESSNESS AND LOW WEEKLY EARNINGS

- **More than half - 54 percent - of the nation's dropouts ages 16 to 24 were jobless on an average month during 2008.**
- Black dropouts experienced the highest jobless rate at 69 percent followed by Asians at 57 percent and Whites at 54 percent. Hispanic dropouts had the lowest jobless rates at 47 percent, reflecting the higher employment rate of young Hispanic immigrants. **In sharp contrast, only about 13 percent of young adults with a college degree were jobless on average in the same time period.**
- **40 percent of all young dropouts in the country were jobless for the entire year.**
- Without a high school diploma, you cannot earn enough money to make ends meet and certainly not enough to reach the American dream of raising a family and buying a home. **The mean annual earnings of the nation's young people with a bachelor's or advanced degree were \$24,797 in 2007, three times higher than the mean earnings for dropouts of \$8,358. These figures include workers with zero earnings.**
- The limited earnings potential of dropouts mean many never leave their parents' or relatives' homes to form independent households. Nearly 37 of every 100 dropouts live in poor or near-poor families.
- **Over \$292,000 is the cost incurred by taxpayers for each dropout over their lifetime** in terms of lost earnings and therefore lower taxes paid and higher spending for social costs including incarceration, healthcare, and welfare.

DROPOUTS MORE LIKELY TO BE SINGLE MOTHERS

- Nearly 38 percent of young female dropouts ages 16 to 24 were mothers, the highest percentage compared to their peers still enrolled in high school or college or with high school or college degrees. **Young high school dropouts were nearly 9 times as likely to have become single mothers as their counterparts with undergraduate college degrees.**

Wuest and other national leaders point out that such programs can be cost effective because the personal and public fiscal benefit more than outweighs the estimated cost of re-enrolling a student who

has dropped out. Due to their low lifetime earnings, dropouts will contribute less in taxes than they will receive in cash benefits, in-kind transfers and correctional costs. By contrast, adults with high school diplomas and additional education contribute major fiscal benefits to the country over their lifetime.

Such programs also would help improve high school graduation rates, especially in the cities, which is a major goal outlined by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

WHAT’S NEEDED: A FEDERAL & STATE RE-ENROLLMENT PROGRAM

Create a national re-enrollment strategy that becomes a fundamental element of America’s national education agenda in the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top program and reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind program.

To address this crisis, the proposed **Hope & Opportunity Pathways through Education (HOPE USA) initiative** seeks to re-enroll 480,000 dropouts every year.

As jointly proposed by the National Education Association, National Urban League, National Council La Raza, Youth Build, the Corps Network, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Soledad Enrichment Action, Los Angeles, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Illinois State Council on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School, the Chicago Urban League and the Alternative Schools Network, HOPE USA would become a \$2 billion federal matching incentive grant program to spur state and local school districts to establish programs to re-enroll dropouts in comprehensive programs that would assist them in earning a high school diploma. The initiatives would be small schools (80-150 students) and led by experienced principals and teachers. They would focus on real-world learning and include summer and after-school components and year-round employment programs.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Emphasize and provide significant funding for re-enrollment of students who have dropped out of school as part of the Obama administration’s Race to the Top initiative and the revised No Child Left Behind legislation.
- Expand year round and summer employment for jobless youth with a \$5 billion initiative.

SUMMARY OF COALITION RELEASING REPORT

This report was released nationally in conjunction with the National Urban League, the National Education Association, Youth Build, The Corps Network, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board, Chicago Urban League, Illinois Council on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped Out of School, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Soledad Enrichment Action, Los Angeles, and the Alternative Schools Network.

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