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Letters: Better-funded schools are a crime deterrent

When talk from Harrisburg heats up about rolling back plans to address underfunded public schools, police chiefs like me take notice. We know what happens to a dream deferred, what happens to the undereducated, unemployed, and poor, who have limited options in life. They help fill our jails and state prisons.

Yes, revenues are tight this year - for corporations, municipalities, and individual homeowners. But what's the cost to communities like Upper Darby if we retreat on public education now?

High school dropouts are eight times more likely to be in jail or prison than people who complete high school. A study by economics professor Lance Lochner concluded that "a one-year increase in the average level of schooling in a community is associated with an almost 30 percent decrease in the murder and assault rates."

Imagine the impact of that on Upper Darby, home to one of the most underfunded school districts in the state. Pennsylvania ranked 44th in the nation for its contribution to public education; funding reform should not wait another day. The prison population certainly isn't.

Michael Chitwood

Superintendent of Police

Upper Darby