



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Alabama's higher education cuts remain among nation's worst, report finds**

*Forrister: Shortchanging public colleges and universities hurts students, communities and economy*

Years of reduced investment in higher education in Alabama have helped drive up college tuition, making higher education less affordable and risking long-term damage to the state's economic growth, according to [a report released Thursday by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#), a nonpartisan research organization based in Washington, D.C.

Alabama has cut state higher education funding by 36.2 percent since 2008 when adjusted for inflation, a decrease of \$4,337 per student, the CBPP finds. As the state has slashed funding, the price of attending public universities has risen considerably. The average tuition at Alabama's four-year public institutions has risen by \$3,757, or 62.7 percent, since the 2007-08 school year – significantly faster than median income growth. For the average student, federal and state aid has not kept pace with rising costs, the report found.

“Too many young Alabamians are having to take on huge debt to try to get ahead, and rapidly rising tuition is scaring many low- and middle-income students away from college altogether,” Arise Citizens’ Policy Project executive director Kimble Forrister said. “Alabama will be stronger, and our communities will be more vibrant, if college is more affordable for students and their families.”

Getting a college degree is increasingly important for professional success and entry into the middle class. Rapidly rising tuition jeopardizes many families’ ability to afford the college education that is often key to economic advancement. This problem is especially significant for low-income students, and it also reduces campus diversity, Forrister said.

Communities benefit when more residents have college degrees. Areas with highly educated residents attract employers that pay higher wages. Those workers, in turn, use those wages to buy goods and services from others in the community, boosting the wages of workers at all education levels, according to the CBPP’s report.

“College-educated workers are essential to our economic success,” Forrister said. “Alabama must invest in higher education now to build the workforce needed to compete in decades to come.”

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[Arise Citizens’ Policy Project](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of 150 congregations and organizations promoting public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.