



# LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS: SINGLE MOTHER STUDENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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December 19, 2019

# IWPR'S STUDENT PARENT SUCCESS INITIATIVE



## **Raises awareness**

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of the student parent population & their experiences in college.

## **Identifies & shares strategies**

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that can help student parents persist & graduate.

## **Builds capacity**

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for serving student parents at the institutional, community, & governmental levels.



## Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Pennsylvania:

Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society

**In Pennsylvania, 18 percent of all undergraduates, or 114,027 students, are parents and 53,581 college students are single mothers.<sup>1</sup>**

Ensuring that these single mothers complete their degrees will improve their families' well-being and economic security and bring important benefits to the Pennsylvania economy. College graduates have higher earnings, higher rates of employment, and lower poverty rates than those without degrees.<sup>2</sup> Their children also reap important benefits, such as improved behavioral and academic outcomes and an increased likelihood of going to college themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the substantial benefits experienced by single mothers who earn college degrees, they are some of the least likely students to earn them: just eight percent of single mother undergraduates in the United States earn an associate or bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling in college, compared with nearly half (49 percent) of women in college who are not mothers.<sup>4</sup>

Taking steps to improve single mothers' college success also has important implications for racial and ethnic equity in higher education. Among female college students nationally, 31 percent of

Black women, 23 percent of Native American/Alaska Native women, 17 percent of women of two or more races, and 16 percent of Latina women are single mothers, compared with 13 percent of White and seven percent of Asian/Pacific Islander women.<sup>5</sup>

### Single mothers in Pennsylvania who graduate with an A.A.:

- Are **37 percent** less likely to live in poverty than a high school graduate.
- Earn **\$267,346** more over their lifetime than what they would have earned with only a high school education.
- Save Pennsylvania **\$27,103** in public assistance spending over their lifetime.
- Contribute **\$69,903** more in lifetime taxes than a single mother with only a high school diploma.

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**"College is a way to have a brighter future for my family."**

**- Single mother student**

- Describes the **costs & benefits** to single mothers & to states of single mothers' college success
- Provides **state- & national-level estimates**
- Demonstrates the **return on societies' investment** in supports that can increase single mothers' attainment

# NATIONALLY, NEARLY 4 MILLION COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE PARENTS



More than  
**1 in 5 undergrads** are  
parents (22% or 3.8 mil)



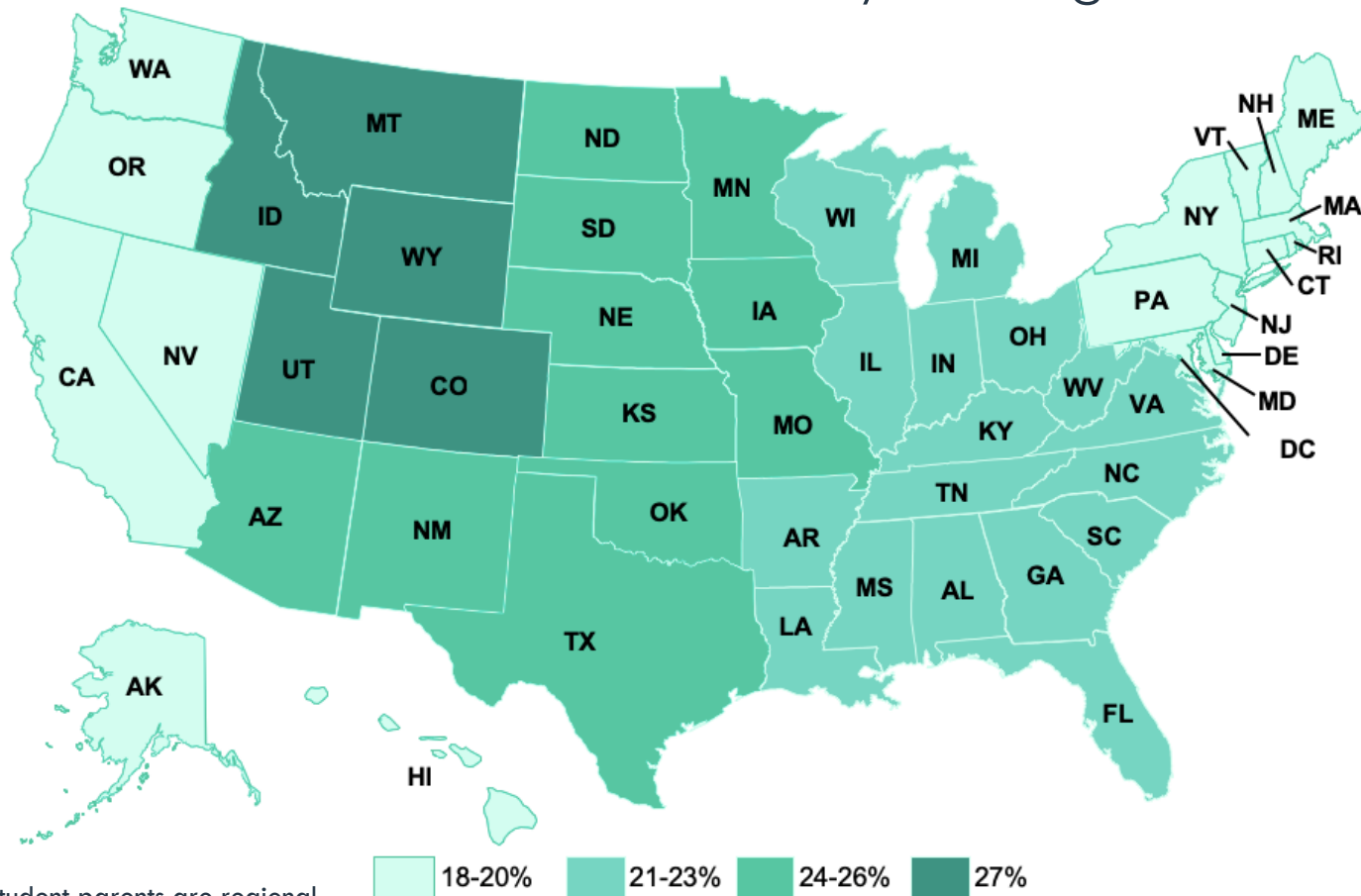
**1.7 million undergrads**  
are single mothers



**Over ¼ of women** in  
college are mothers (28%)

# STUDENT PARENTS ARE PREVALENT ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

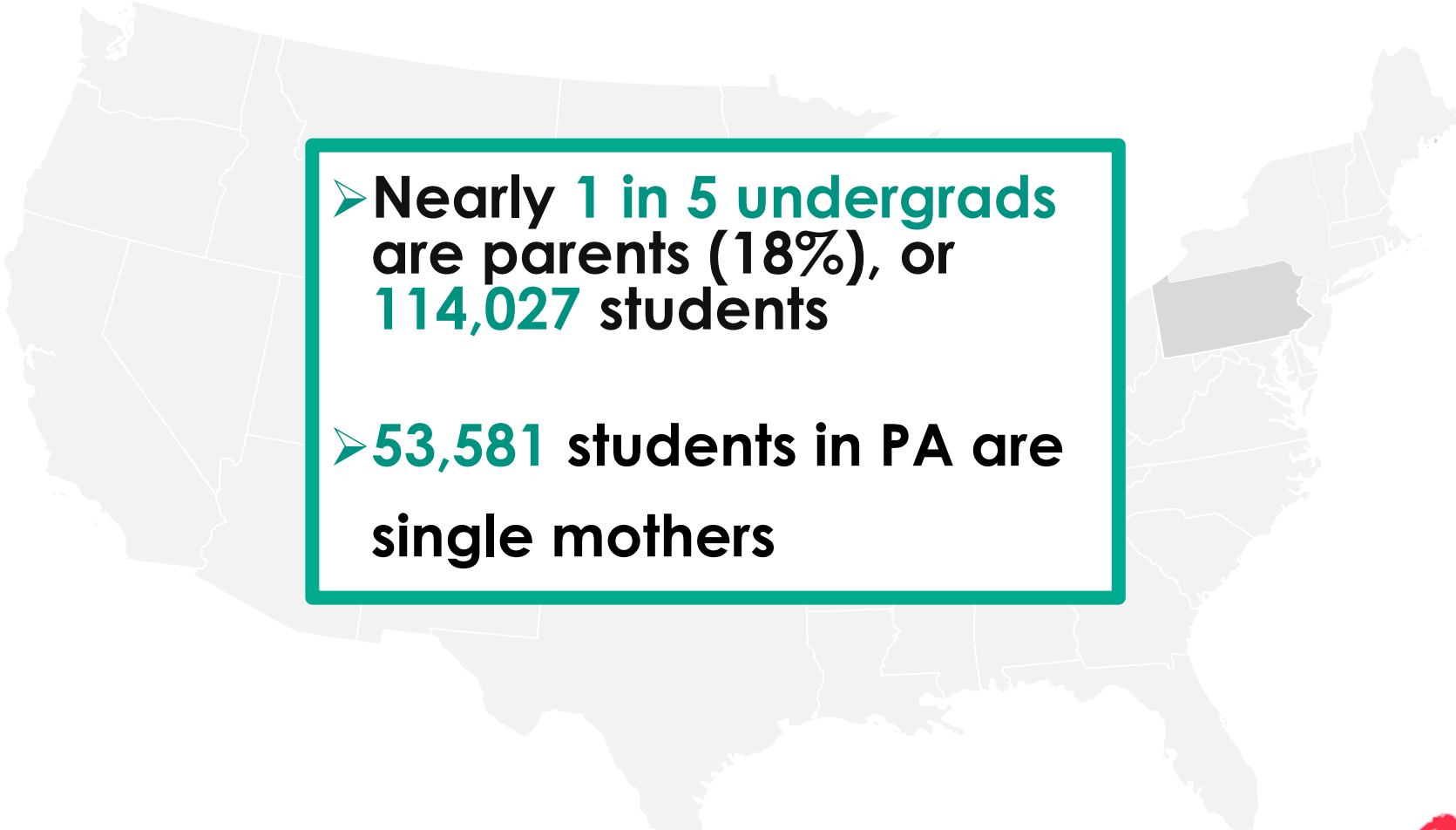
Share of Students Who are Parents by U.S. Region, 2015-16



**Note:** State shares of student parents are regional.

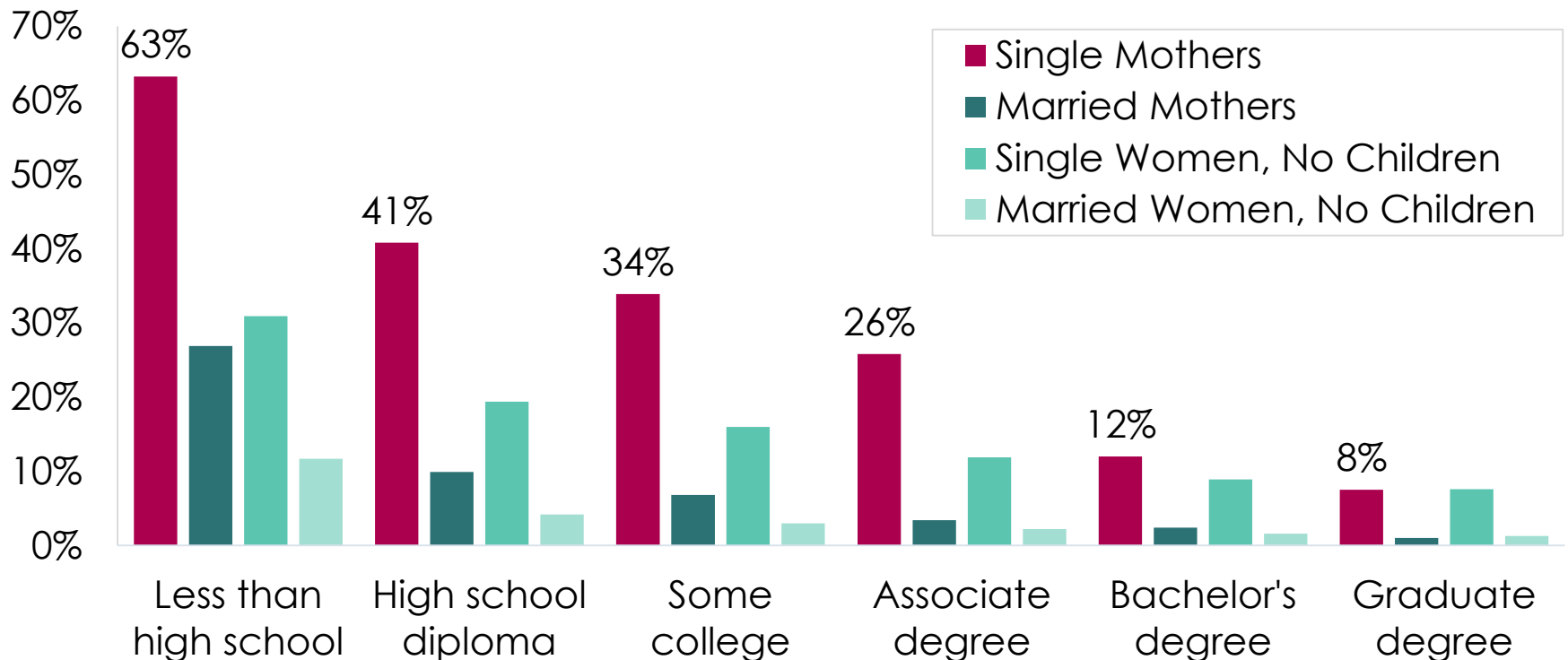
**Source:** IWPR analysis of data from the 2016 NPSAS & IPEDS.

# STUDENT PARENTS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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- **Nearly 1 in 5 undergrads are parents (18%), or 114,027 students**
  - **53,581 students in PA are single mothers**

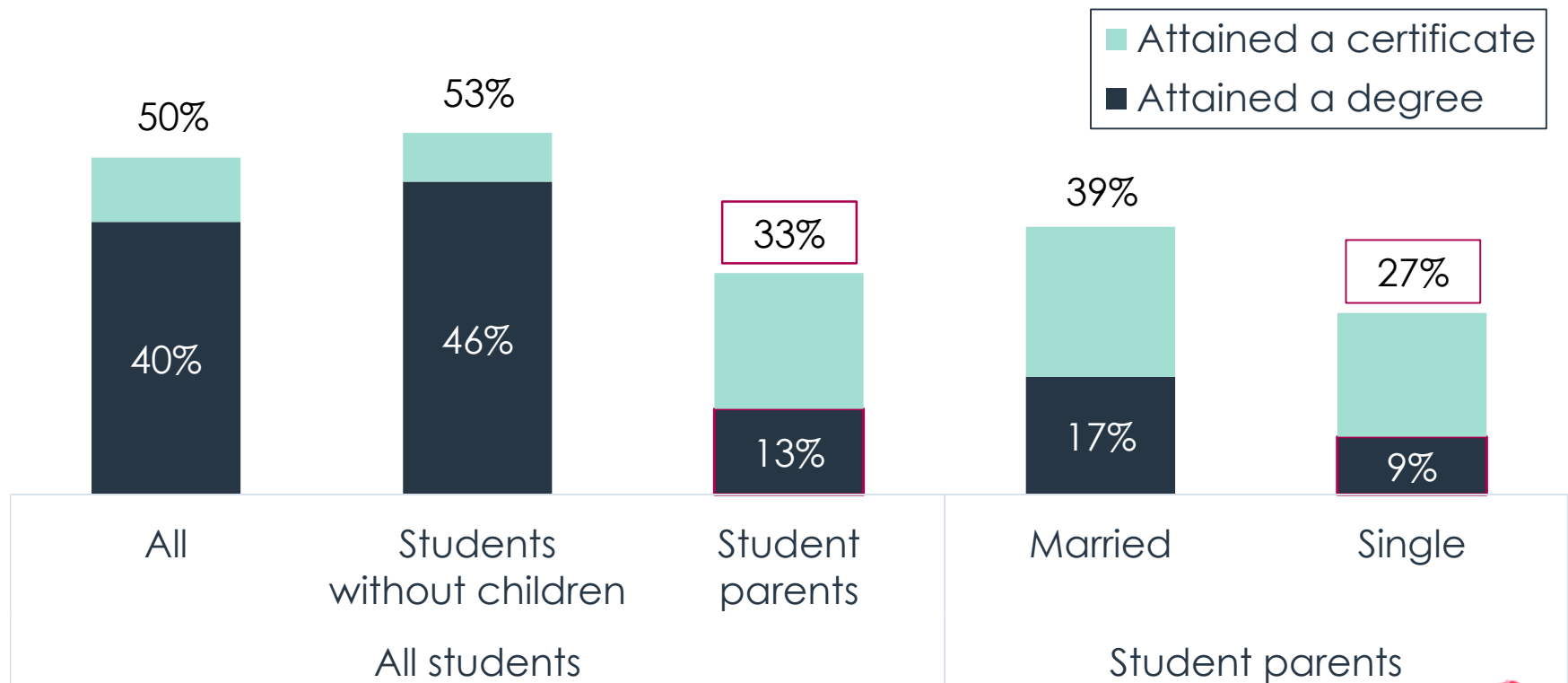
# SINGLE MOMS WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO LIVE IN POVERTY

Share of Women in Pennsylvania Living in Poverty, by Educational Attainment, 2015-17



# JUST 1/3 OF STUDENT PARENTS GRADUATE ON TIME & MOST LEAVE WITHOUT A DEGREE

Six Year Attainment Rate of Degrees or Certificates by Parent & Marital Status, 2003-09

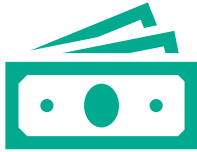


Source: IWPR analysis of data from the 2003-04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:04/09).

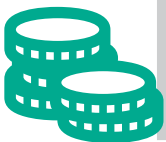


# BENEFITS TO PENNSYLVANIA WHEN SINGLE MOTHERS GO TO COLLEGE

**Economic Benefits** of Single Mothers' College Attainment by Education for [Pennsylvania](#)



Education Level	Lifetime Earnings Gains	Lifetime Reduction in Public Assistance	Additional Lifetime Tax Contributions
Some College, No Degree	\$105 K	\$ 10 K	\$28 K
Associate Degree	\$267 K	\$ 27 K	\$ 70 K
Bachelor's Degree	\$609 K	\$ 47 K	\$ 199 K



**Note:** All figures are in comparison to single mothers whose highest level of educational attainment is high school. Public assistance savings includes TANF, SNAP & Section 8 Housing assistance. Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

**Source:** IWPR. 2019. Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Pennsylvania: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society.

# WHEN SINGLE MOMS IN PA GRADUATE, THEY RECEIVE A SUBSTANTIAL RETURN

For **every \$1 invested** in college,  
single mothers in Pennsylvania get back...

**\$6.42**



for earning  
a B.A.

**\$8.36**



for earning  
an A.A.

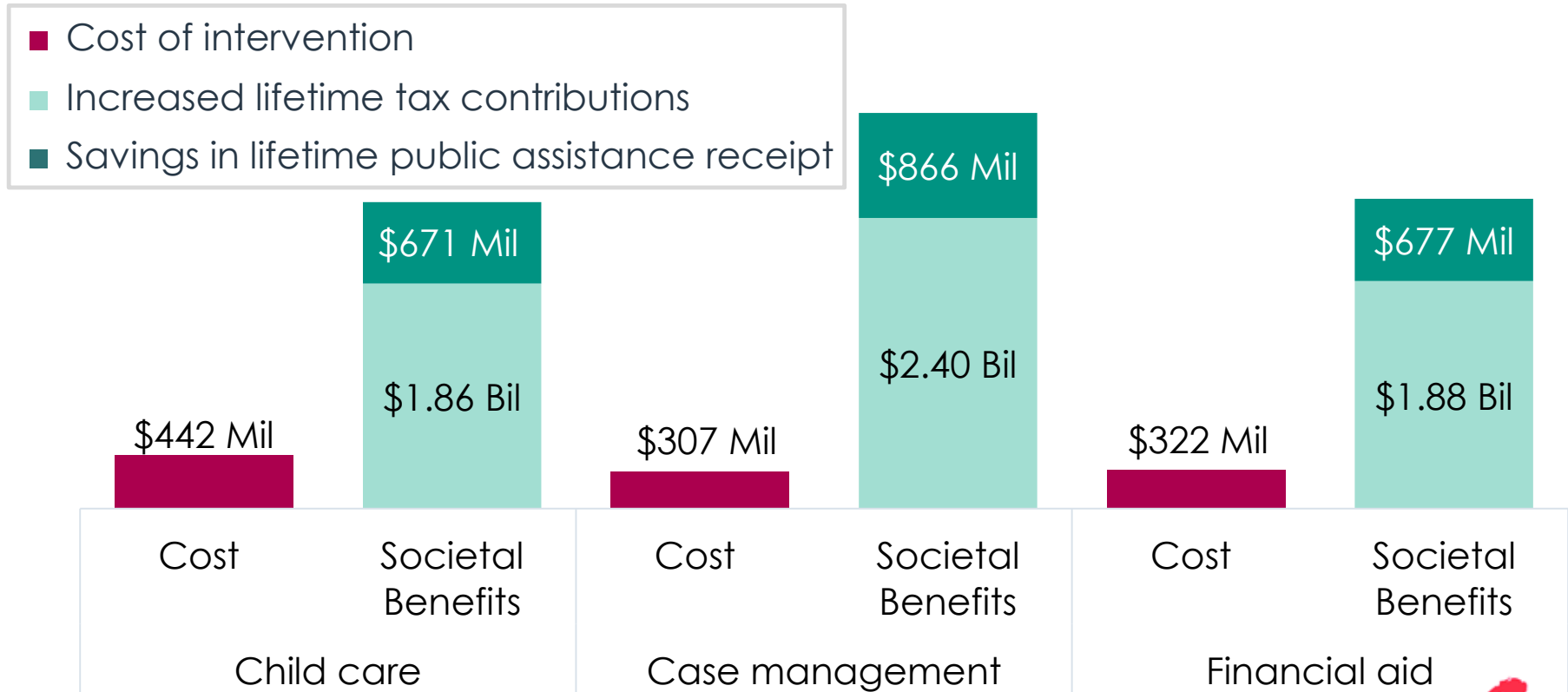
**\$2.36**



for some  
college credit

# INVESTMENTS IN SINGLE MOMS' SUCCESS WOULD MORE THAN PAY FOR THEMSELVES

Contributions & Costs of Investing in Currently Enrolled Single Mother Students in Pennsylvania

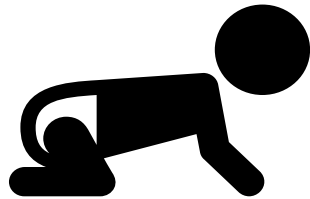


**Note:** Total societal benefits calculated for single moms who earn B.A.s, A.A.s, & some college, but no degree.

**Source:** IWPR. 2019. "Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education."

# PA WOULD SEE BIG RETURNS ON INVESTMENTS IN SUPPORTS FOR SINGLE MOMS

For every dollar spent, Pennsylvania would get back:



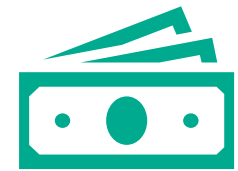
**\$ 3.82**

For  
Child Care



**\$5.74**

For  
Case Management



**\$5.30**

For  
Financial Aid

# STUDENT PARENTS FACE UNIQUE OBSTACLES WHILE ENROLLED

*Compared with “traditional” college students...*

- Student parents are 1.7x more likely to **live in or near poverty**

- They **work nearly 4 more days/week**

- They are 1.5x more likely to **enroll part-time** (or a mix)

- More than half of student parents have **children who need child care**



# Thank you!



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