

## AFRICAN AMERICANS AND TENNCARE

I have written several papers on the condition of African Americans in Tennessee for one reason... to show that they, as well as all other minorities, can have a better way of life. African Americans are just as capable as anyone else to succeed whether it is in education, employment, or any other aspect of life. I believe there is a cause and effect on any community that has a 46 percent graduation rate for its people. Because of a lack of education, African Americans comprise 70 percent of the juvenile offenders even though this group only accounts for less than 25 percent of the population under the age of 18. African Americans outnumber whites in parole in the adult justice system and are over represented in the area of probation as well. This group accounts for only 16% of the adult population of Tennessee.

What are the figures for African Americans and TennCare? One half of all African American children are on TennCare, and nearly one-third of all African American adults are on TennCare. This is due in large part, I believe, to the rate of poverty among this group.

Think about the savings if we can help break this cycle of crime and poverty by giving African Americans and all Tennesseans a real education through school vouchers. As students graduate and go on to college, they will not need TennCare or welfare because they will not qualify for it. They will have the opportunity to obtain insurance through private means either through their employer or purchasing coverage themselves. This will also reduce the crime rate as well.

I used to work for the state in the Children and Adult Protective Services departments. I have seen first hand the hardship of people due to a lack of an education. Tennessee is nearly last in almost every category of education, income and other standard of living issues. Making changes in education and prison reform will also reduce the citizen's need for TennCare, thus lowering the demand and cost for everyone.

