Graduating Today for a Healthier Tomorrow:
The Healthcare Impact of Raising the Arizona Drop-Out Age to 18
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ABSTRACT

America is experiencing a ‘drop out epidemic.’ According to the Department of Education, the national high school graduation rate is 73 percent. Arizona's dropout rate was the worst in the nation in 2003. Dropping out of high school can have serious consequences: young people who leave school early often enter a life of poverty, crime, prison, and broken homes. Society suffers as well, due to loss of productivity and higher costs for social services and health care. One in four Medicaid recipients is a high school dropout. Dropouts have higher rates of childhood obesity, lower exercise levels, lower self described health status, shorter life span, lack of employment, and lack of insurance.

Research indicates that approximately one-quarter of potential dropouts remain in school because of compulsory school laws. Each drop-out who graduates would save Arizona $11,088 over his/her lifetime in Medicaid costs and uninsured healthcare costs. Graduating all Arizona students in 2009 would have rendered a total lifetime savings to the state of Arizona of $366 million. There is an estimated 2:1 ratio of health savings to educational cost for every Arizona student who graduates instead of dropping out.

The connection between education, productivity, and health is clear. Increasing the compulsory age of school attendance would reduce health care costs and would establish a long-term investment in public health.
References: