

# West Virginia's Cuts to Higher Education Threaten Access and Equity

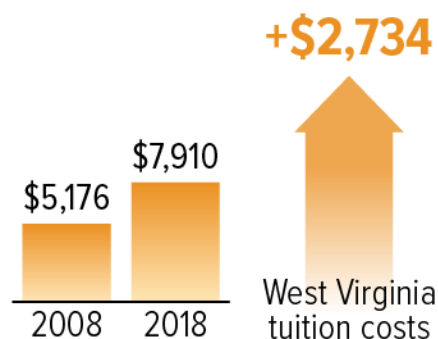
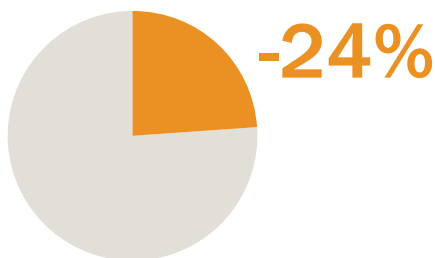
High-quality, affordable, and accessible public higher education is critical to building a prosperous and strong state economy, where the benefits of higher education are broadly shared and felt by every community regardless of race or class. But state support of public colleges and universities in West Virginia has fallen short, with overall per-student funding for public two- and four-year colleges in the 2018 school year at a lower level than it was in 2008, after adjusting for inflation.

## A Decade of Funding Cuts and Tuition Hikes: 2008-2018

Per-student funding for West Virginia's public colleges and universities is 24% below 2008 levels.

Since 2008, average tuition in West Virginia is up by \$2,734 for four-year public colleges and universities.

The \$2,202 cut in per-student funding and tuition increases have made college less affordable, shifting costs from the state to students and jeopardizing quality at public universities.

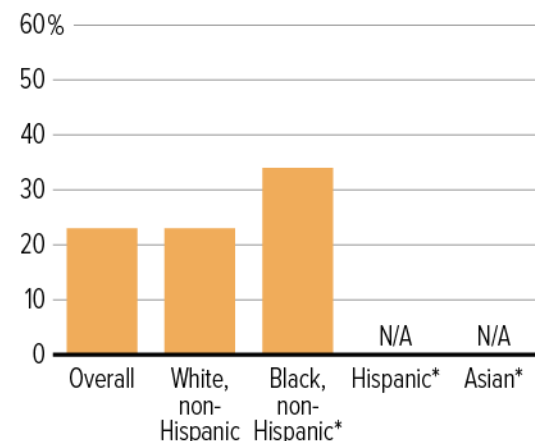


## Families Have Been Hard-Pressed to Absorb Rising Tuition Costs

The cost shift from states to students has happened over a period when many families have had trouble absorbing additional expenses due to stagnant or declining incomes. Nationally, tuition jumped 37 percent between the 2008 and 2018 school years, while real median income grew just 1.8 percent.

In 2017, the average net price — that is, published tuition and fees, room and board, and books and supplies minus the average aid received for a student — at a public four-year institution accounted for 23 percent of a family's median household income. For families of color — whose members often face additional barriers to employment and difficulty accessing better-paying jobs — the burden of college costs is particularly heavy.

West Virginia's average net price of attendance at a public 4-year university as a share of median household income by race, 2017



\*Median income is statistically different from that of non-Hispanic white households; N/A = Results are suppressed where the standard error associated with the median income is greater than 10%.

Sources: CBPP calculations using the "Grapevine" higher education appropriations data from Illinois State University, enrollment and combined state and local funding data from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association and the Consumer Price Index, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the US Census