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Is It Wrong to Pay Incarcerated People in Jail? This Pennsylvania County Says No

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Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, is experimenting with a policy that has drawn national attention and local skepticism: [providing cash compensation](#) to people confined in the Allegheny County Jail in the [city of Pittsburgh](#). The funds include monthly disbursements to all those incarcerated and additional pay tied to work assignments and participation in educational programming.

At first glance, the policy may sound counterintuitive. Why pay people who are in jail, especially when many law-abiding residents are struggling to afford housing, food and transportation? That reaction is understandable. But it often reflects a misunderstanding about who is held in the Allegheny County Jail, the amount of the disbursements and what the county is trying to accomplish.