



Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

February 7, 2013

Dear Member of Congress:

With the effects of the economic downturn still being felt, families are working harder than ever to provide for their children, keep them safe and ensure their success in school and in life. Furthermore the recent tragedy in Newtown, CT, has brought a heightened awareness to the need to provide kids with opportunities to develop their social and emotional skills and afterschool programs are a recognized resource for helping kids develop a wide range of skills including working well with others, assuming leadership roles and giving back to the community. For these reasons and more, the Afterschool Alliance is dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children.

Today, more than 200 parents, educators and state and community leaders are walking the halls of Congress, while hundreds more are meeting in District Congressional offices, to show their support for young people and to encourage Congress to support efforts to make quality afterschool and summer learning programs accessible to the children, families and communities that rely on them. **Both the FY2013 and FY2014 appropriations processes offer an opportunity for you and your colleagues in Congress to continue to provide funding for two federal funding streams that support afterschool:**

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)**
- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**

While the nation faces serious budget challenges, any reduction in federal spending should not come at the expense of investing in our children. As you and your colleagues roll up your sleeves to tackle challenging budget and education reform issues, we urge you to keep in mind the renewed appreciation for the role of community partners and afterschool programs in helping students succeed. A decade ago, a bipartisan commitment to quality afterschool programs was included in the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). In recent years, Congress has maintained that commitment by investing in 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which now provide more than one million children in 11,000 communities with high-quality, safe before-school, afterschool and summer learning opportunities critical to their success in school and in life.

Yet even with the current funding, the demand for affordable, quality afterschool experiences far exceeds the availability. *America After 3PM*, a national survey of 30,000 households, found that while afterschool programs are serving more young people than ever, the number of unsupervised children in the United States has increased. **More than 18 million children have parents who would like to enroll their child in an afterschool program if programs were available.** Parents of all income levels already pay more than 75 percent of the total cost of afterschool programs. Maintaining or increasing funding for the 21st CCLC program and CCDF will leverage the fees paid by parents to meet the growing demand for quality afterschool programs.

Additionally, reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) presents an opportunity to further strengthen the federal commitment to afterschool programs by taking several key actions. **Please co-sponsor the reintroduction of the bipartisan *Afterschool for America's Children Act* to incorporate improvements to the 21st CCLC initiative as part of the ESEA reauthorization process.** The bipartisan bill reauthorizes the 21st CCLC program and supports quality afterschool, before-

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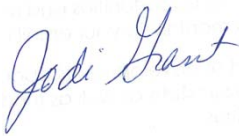
school and summer learning programs that enhance and complement the school day through engaging, hands-on, experiential learning activities.

Years of research have shown that afterschool programs help keep young people safe, improve academic performance and provide a lifeline for working families across America. Evaluations of 21st CCLC and other afterschool programs show that children who participate in afterschool programs improve their grades, attend school more regularly and report higher aspirations regarding finishing school and going to college. In addition, young people in these programs are less likely to be involved in crime, use drugs or alcohol, or engage in other dangerous behaviors.

In addition to co-sponsoring the *Afterschool for America's Children Act* and supporting afterschool program funding in the FY2013 and FY2014 appropriations processes, I hope that you will also join the Afterschool Caucus—if you have not already—to show support for committing federal resources to afterschool.

As a nation, we expect schools, communities and families to work together to keep our children safe before, during and after school hours. Afterschool programs have a proven track record of bringing together community resources to keep young people safe, help working families and provide a wide range of learning experiences that complement the school day. Please support a continued investment in the 21st CCLC initiative and CCDF. Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Jodi Grant
Executive Director

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