



NEWS RELEASE  
January 17, 2014

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## **Afterschool Leader Praises FY2014 Budget, Lauds Congress for “Prioritizing Children and Working Families”**

*Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance*

“The omnibus appropriations bill that Congress passed this week is a welcome step in the right direction toward prioritizing children and working families, as the country makes hard spending choices.

In restoring nearly \$60 million in sequester cuts to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) initiative, Congress signaled that keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn, and helping working families are priorities. That is very good news, as is the funding level of \$1.149 billion, now in place for the remainder of FY2014. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC is the nation’s chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs, providing badly needed programs to 1.1 million students, many of whom would otherwise be unsupervised and at-risk when schools are closed.

This appropriations bill is also a step forward in terms what it does not contain – language that would allow 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds to be diverted for purposes other than providing the afterschool, before-school and summer programs children so urgently need.

The omnibus package contains welcome increases in spending for Title I; the Safe Schools, TRIO and Gear Up programs; and the Child Care Development Block Grant – all of which support afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs. We also welcome the increases in funding for AmeriCorps and for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs.

Investing in afterschool programs is an investment in our future. These programs are structured to accommodate working parents’ schedules and give students the chance to participate in hands-on, creative, engaging activities that are both fun and educational. Children in afterschool programs get homework help, mentoring, career exploration, sports and physical fitness, STEM, the arts and much more.

In a 2012 study conducted by the Afterschool Alliance, nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) reported that their budgets were in worse shape than at the height of the recession in 2008, and 62 percent reported that their funding was down from three years ago.

Many more students across the country need access to afterschool programs. More than 15 million school-age children – more than one in four kids in the United States – are unsupervised after the school day ends. The parents of 18 million children say they would enroll their kids in afterschool programs – if programs were available. Too often, they are not but Congress can start to change that by increasing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding.”

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*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*