

Talking to Congress about Afterschool - *Sample Script* *Afterschool for All Challenge - June 12, 2019*

Use this outline as a guide in your meetings with members of Congress and their staff in talking about afterschool. Next to each section, you may want to jot down the name of the person(s) responsible for covering that point in the meeting.

Most importantly, remember to ask the members you visit to oppose elimination or cuts to 21st CCLC and instead support funding for afterschool through 21st CCLC.

A few last minute tips:

- Be sure to stay on topic and convey the important benefits of afterschool for kids, families and communities.
- Manage the time you are allotted properly.
- Allow everyone to say a few words.
- Offer to follow up with additional information.
- Give and receive business cards.
- Have fun!

Introductions — _____ (name of person covering this point)

The Group Leader should introduce him/herself first, followed by everyone else. State your name, title and organization or affiliation. Those who have brought business cards should give them to staff at the beginning of the meeting.

Thanks for taking the time to meet with us —

- Today we're with hundreds of afterschool and summer learning supporters on Capitol Hill and in district offices as part of the *Afterschool for All Challenge*, an event organized by the Afterschool Alliance.
- First of all, thank you for supporting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative and the Child Care Development Block Grant in the FY2019 omnibus spending bill.

We're here to ask you to build on the success of these investments by supporting funding for 21st CCLC and CCDBG in fiscal year 2020 —

- Please increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative by \$100 million for FY2020, bringing the total to \$1.32 billion. This amount would allow approximately 100,000 additional children to access quality afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs through school and community based providers in all 50 states and would help address rising expenses associated with hiring and training quality staff.
- We know this is a challenging year and realize you have very difficult decisions to make. In a climate where a vocal few want to eliminate 21st CCLC, we ask supporters like you to make funding 21st CCLC one of your priorities.
- Current funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative covers the costs associated with quality afterschool and summer learning programs for 1.7 million children. However, for every grant awarded at least three eligible grant applications are denied due to lack of adequate funding. Instead of eliminating afterschool for almost 2 million students, we should be looking for ways to increase support and open up more opportunities for students.
- The evidence that these programs work is abundant, with decades of research. And, there is strong public support for funding - 83 percent of American voters oppose cuts to funding for afterschool and summer.
- In addition, this federal support for afterschool provides an infrastructure that leverages funding from local businesses, nonprofits, partners, volunteers, schools, and others. Research shows that every one dollar invested saves at least three dollars.

Ensure the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has the essential discretionary funding it needs for FY 2020, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels.

- Roughly, 45 percent of children served through CCDF are school-aged (5-12 years old) and participate in afterschool programs. These necessary funds would allow states to implement the updates, such as enhanced safety requirements and monitoring, made to the law in the December 2014 reauthorization.

Funding for 21st CCLC and afterschool and summer learning programs is critical —

- Every day, 11.3 million children are alone after school and are unsupervised for an average of eight hours per week. Parents of more than 19.4 million youth say their children would participate in a program if one were available in their community.
- **Make afterschool real and relevant:**
 - Talk about how many children are currently served through 21st CCLC in your state/community versus how many are on waitlists or could be served with more funding (see your state fact sheet and listing of 21st CCLC grants, and draw the member's or staffer's attention to those same materials in the leave behind packet).
 - Talk about your program(s). Tell a story about how your program makes an impact in your community with a focus on alignment of programs with the school day.
 - Talk about the unmet needs that remain in your community.
 - In addition, if you have any of your own evaluation data at the state or local level, be sure to share it.

Other Asks – As relevant to your state/network

Higher Education

In reauthorizing the Higher Education Act we ask that you:

- **Strengthen the commitment that federal work study programs support students working in community service, including community based and afterschool programs;**
- **Support teacher pipeline programs that include afterschool programs, and**
- **Emphasize other policies that build on the strong partnerships between colleges and universities and afterschool programs.**

As you may know many of our colleges are great community partners. Undergraduates in work study programs participate as afterschool program staff providing younger students with near peer mentors, who often look like them and come from similar communities. These relationships allow the K-12 students to see themselves on a path to college and provide programs with quality, diverse staff from a variety of academic disciplines. Universities can be encouraged to continue to build on the successes of these models and provide dual service to undergraduates, the community, and the next crop of college going students.

Teacher training models exist that provide university students with direct, hands-on experiences as afterschool and summer educators. These programs provide professional development and personal development for the undergraduates and broaden the base of undergraduates who envision themselves in education careers. By working with principals in districts in need of teacher recruitment, diversity and retention, they also support filling future pipelines for educators in the surrounding community.

Child Nutrition

In reauthorizing the Child Nutrition Act we ask that you:

- **Change area eligibility from 50% of children eligible for free and reduced price meals to 40%. This would increase the number of communities served and make afterschool and summer meals eligibility consistent with the eligibility for a 21st CCLC grant applicant.**

Keeping students engaged over the summer so that we can help feed their minds and bodies is essential to the work we do as communities and educators. 85% of parents support public funding for summer learning programs and 88% of teachers report that summer learning programs are critical to students' success. In fact, summer learning loss has been shown to account for 2/3rds of the achievement gap between low income children and middle income peers by 9th grade.

Meals programs offered in congregate feeding locations, such as summer learning programs and camps, recreation centers, libraries and other community spaces are often the key connection students have to learning over the summer months. Meals programs that support enrichment opportunities in addition to meals service have been a successful element of the summer meals program. We need to continue to sustain the funding and motivation to serve the whole child with the meals program wherever possible.

Improving the area eligibility test for summer and afterschool meals to allow community-based organizations to participate if 40 percent of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced price meals will increase the number of sites and number of children served. Currently, a summer meal site qualifies if 50 percent or more of children in the area qualify for free or reduced price school meals as defined by school or census data. This threshold keeps many communities with significant numbers of low-income children, but not a high enough concentration of poverty, from participating. In addition, the 50 percent test is inconsistent with federally funded summer programs, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Title I, which require at least 40 percent. Communities eligible for these important education programs should also be eligible to receive summer meals funding.

Lastly, please join the Afterschool Caucus and support the 20th Lights On Afterschool this October by visiting a program!

Check Caucus list first. If the member is already on the Caucus, skip this section and thank them for being on the Caucus.

- To show your support for afterschool programs, we ask that you **(or your boss, depending on whether you are meeting with a member or staff member)** join the (House/Senate) Afterschool Caucus and help realize the goal of providing access to afterschool opportunities for all youth.

Reinforce the primary asks at the end of the meeting —

- **Please support afterschool by increasing funding for 21st CCLC by \$100 million for FY2020, bringing the total to \$1.32 billion and allowing approximately 100,000 additional children to be served.** This will build on the recent investments made by Congress and ensure that our kids have safe and enriching environments to go to after school.

Wrap-up and next steps —

- Wrap up the meeting by thanking the staff person or member again for their time.
- Reference the materials you are leaving with the office in the leave-behind packet and ask who you should contact about scheduling a site visit the next time the member is at home.
- Mention *Lights On Afterschool* on Oct. 24, 2019, and raise the possibility of your member participating in your event.
- Offer yourself as a resource any time they are looking for information or a program to visit.

Plan to send a follow up or thank you email after the meeting.

Advancing Opportunity For All

- Afterschool programs help kids discover what they love to do and build the skills they need to succeed. They provide engaging learning opportunities, opportunities for physical activity, and they give parents peace of mind during the hours after school when juvenile crime peaks. Recent research and evaluations show consistent increases in student achievement and school day attendance. In your folder is a piece outlining recent research about how 21st CCLC afterschool programs positively impact student academics, grades, school day attendance and more.

Military Readiness

- More than 71 percent of young Americans between the ages of 17 and 24 cannot serve in the U.S. military due to reasons related to health, physical appearance, criminal records, and educational background.
- Afterschool programs are a promising approach to help improve the health and wellness of students, from providing students with access to nutritious foods to promoting healthy habits to keeping students physically fit. According to a recent report by the Heritage Foundation, young people engaged in well-managed academic and extracurricular activities are less likely to commit crimes than their counterparts. Combined with keeping young people safe as well as providing academic enrichment, 21st CCLC and CCDBG funded local afterschool and summer learning programs can help increase the likelihood that more young people are eligible to serve in the military.

Substance Use Prevention and Positive Mental Health

- With a proven track record for increasing resilience, supporting positive youth development, and preventing substance use, 21st CCLC funded afterschool and summer learning programs are a cost-effective way to help build and support an integrated, trauma-informed system that supports children, youth, and families. Afterschool programs keep young people safe and out of harm's way but also instill good-decision-making and connect young people with peer mentors and caring adults.