

Talking to Congress about Afterschool - *Sample Script* *Afterschool for All Challenge- May 2022*

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 support funding for afterschool through 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC).

A few tips on how to make the most of your meetings:

- ***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.***
- ***Plan to send a follow up or thank-you email after the meeting.***
- ***Have fun!***

Get Started with Introductions

- *The Group Leader should introduce themselves first, followed by everyone else. State your name, title, and organization or affiliation.*

Express Gratitude

- Thanks for taking the time to meet with us.
- This week we are participating in the Afterschool for All Challenge with afterschool supporters around the nation to bring attention to the value and need for local afterschool programs.
- First of all, thank you for supporting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and the Child Care Development Block Grant in the FY 2022 spending bill, as well as the federal COVID relief bills passed over the last two years.

Share Impact of COVID Relief Funds

- We'd like to start off by sharing the impact of the COVID relief dollars used for afterschool and summer.
 - *Share specific details of how ARP funds are being used to support afterschool and summer in your state.*
 - Nationally, while about \$30 billion in American Rescue Plan ESSER funds could be used for afterschool or summer learning, the best estimate is that only 20 percent (about \$6.5 billion) in state and local ARP ESSER has been spent on afterschool and summer – although at the local level it is hard to track exactly what school districts consider afterschool programs.
 - We ask that any future guidance, reporting measures, and additional funding distinguish comprehensive afterschool and summer enrichment from additional hours of traditional school or traditional summer school programming. Congress can ensure districts, states, and other grantees communicate how they are supporting academics and enrichment jointly, and how students, families, and additional community-based partners are engaged in developing and implementing programs. Additional funding opportunities should be specifically modeled after successful state and local examples of comprehensive programming and partnerships.

21st CCLC Ask

- While the ARP investments are critical to short-term recovery, we need a longer-term strategy to meet the needs of young people and families during the afterschool and summer hours. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)-funded afterschool and summer programs have been providing essential supports to children and families for decades and Congress can leverage the afterschool and summer infrastructure that already exists by increasing the investment in 21st CCLC.
- We ask that you please increase funding for the 21st CCLC initiative by \$500 million for FY 2023, bringing the total to \$1.789 billion. This amount would allow approximately 500,000 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, especially those associated with hiring, training, and retaining quality staff.

- Coming out of the pandemic, young people need a wide range of academic and holistic supports to help ensure their success in school and in life. We know this is a challenging year and realize you have very difficult decisions to make.
- Current funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative covers the costs associated with quality afterschool and summer learning programs for just under 2 million children. But, when you factor in inflation, funding for 21st CCLC is actually lower today than it was 10 years ago.
- The evidence that these programs work is abundant, with decades of research. And, there is strong public support for funding – 87 percent of parents support public funding for afterschool programs, an all-time high level of support.
- In addition, this federal support for afterschool provides an infrastructure that leverages funding from local businesses, non-profits, partners, volunteers, schools, and others. Research shows that every one dollar invested saves at least three dollars.

CCDBG Ask

- The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is another longer-term strategy for supporting school-age children and families. We ask that you ensure CCDBG has the essential discretionary funding it needs for FY 2023, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels.
- Roughly, 45 percent of children served through CCDBG are school-aged (5-12 years old) and participate in afterschool programs. These necessary funds would allow states to implement the updates made to the law in the December 2014 reauthorization, such as enhanced safety requirements and monitoring.

Make the Case for Increased Investments in Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs

- Every day, 7.7 million children are alone after school and are unsupervised. Parents of 25 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) and the impact of the pandemic.* Tell a story about how your program makes an impact in your community with a focus on alignment of programs with the school day. Discuss any federal COVID relief (ESSER I, II, III) that your programs was able to access and how the funds were used – and/or discuss the challenges in being able to access COVID relief funds and the existing needs.
 - *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.*

Optional Asks – As relevant to your state/network

- See [additional policy issues and optional asks document](#) for possible ideas and/or feel free to raise any state specific issues if time permits.

Afterschool Caucus and Lights On Afterschool - Note: [Check Caucus list first](#). If the member is already on the Caucus, simply thank them for being on the Caucus and offer the Lights On invite.

- Lastly, please join the Afterschool Caucus and support the *Lights On Afterschool* this October by visiting a program.
 - 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)** 100+ members of the Afterschool Caucus and help realize the goal of providing access to afterschool opportunities for all youth.
 - For more information about joining the Senate Afterschool Caucus, Congressional offices may contact Co-chairs Sen. Murkowski (AK) and Sen. Smith (MN): Brennan Barber (Brennan_Barber@smith.senate.gov) or Karen McCarthy (Karen_McCarthy@murkowski.senate.gov). For the House Afterschool Caucus, Rep. Cicilline (RI), contact Carrick Heilferty Carrick.Heilferty@mail.house.gov with Representative Cicilline's office.
 - We'd like to invite you to attend a *Lights On* event this fall. More than 5,000 *Lights On Afterschool* events will celebrate the role afterschool programs play in helping young people thrive. We can follow-up with more details this summer.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

- *Wrap up the meeting by thanking the staff person or member again for their time.*
- *Reinforce the 21st CCLC ask – We really hope you will support afterschool and summer by increasing funding for 21st CCLC by \$500 million for FY 2023, bringing the total to \$1.789 billion and allowing approximately 500,000 additional children to be served.*
- *Reference the materials you can email them and ask who you should contact about scheduling a site visit the next time the member is at home.*
- *Offer yourself as a resource any time they are looking for information or a program to visit.*