

Talking to Congress about Afterschool



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 Center (21st CCLC) funding and the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

A few last minute tips:

- ✓ Be sure to stay on-topic and convey the important benefits of afterschool for kids, families, and communities.
- ✓ Meetings are short; plan how your team will cover your points in the allotted time!
- ✓ Allow everyone to say a few words, and make sure young people have time to share.
- ✓ Offer to follow up with additional information. It's OK if you don't have all the answers to questions raised!
- ✓ Have fun!

Introductions _____

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

For the rest of the meeting, divvy up speaking roles.

Thanks for taking the time to meet with us.

- We are part of a delegation of afterschool advocates meeting with members of Congress and their staff to emphasize the power and impact of local afterschool and summer learning programs.
- First, thank you for supporting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative and the Child Care Development Block Grant in the past.

21st CCLC and CCDBG Ask _____

We are here to ask you to build on the success of these investments by supporting funding for 21st CCLC and CCDBG in fiscal year 2026 —

- Please increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative by \$750 million for FY2026, to bring the total to almost \$2.1 billion. This amount would give thousands more children access to quality afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs in 50 states. And, it would help address the challenges of rising expenses associated with hiring and training quality staff.
- We know it is fiscally challenging times, however many of our young people are in crisis and need a wide range of supports for their academics and well-being. We know this is a challenging year and realize you have tough decisions to make. However, funding cuts or even level funding would result in students losing access to the quality afterschool and summer programs that support them. Elimination of 21st CCLC as dedicated afterschool and summer funding would mean 1.4 million students would lose programs in 10,000 communities and 150,000 staff would lose jobs.
- Current funding for the initiative supports quality afterschool and summer learning programs for about 1.4 million children. However, program costs continue to increase and current funding levels do not ensure that staff are paid a living wage and

provided benefits, including paid sick time. Decades of research show that afterschool and summer programs work. Students who regularly participate in 21st Century Community Learning Centers improve their school attendance, class participation and behavior, and reading and math grades. Increasing 21st CCLC funding is critical to accelerate learning and support student well-being. With NAEP scores declining, the additional customized support that afterschool and summer programs provide is critical.

- Support for funding programs is at an all-time high. 9 in 10 voters - across parties, community types, racial and ethnic groups, and ages - agree that elected officials should invest more in them, based on a December 2024 poll.
- 21st CCLC programs are also able to leverage additional resources, engaging local businesses, nonprofits, partners, volunteers, schools, and others to support the program. Research shows that every \$1 invested saves at least \$3.

We ask that you help ensure the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has the essential discretionary funding it needs for FY2025, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels. _____

- Nearly half (45 percent) of children served through Child Care Development Fund are school-aged (5-12 years old), and include participants in afterschool and summer learning programs. Any changes to federal childcare law should continue to support school-aged students and continue to allow CCDBG funds to support quality afterschool and summer learning programs.
- Working parents need care for their kids, whose school schedules typically start later and end earlier than work hours, and include long summer breaks. CCDBG subsidies allow parents access to safe, high-quality settings and provide real choices for kids' development, socialization and overall well-being

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

- Every day, 7.7 million children are alone after school and are unsupervised. Parents of nearly 25 million youth say their children would participate in a program if one were available.

Make afterschool real and relevant: (various speakers on your team)

- 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 attention to those same materials in the leave behind packet).
- Data! 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 _____

- We hope you can join us in visiting a local afterschool showcase during *Lights On Afterschool* this October! Who should we contact about scheduling a site visit?
- In April 2025 the Administration ended \$400 million in AmeriCorps grants; many supported afterschool and summer learning programs in our state. Due to the loss of AmeriCorps staff, programs will need to cut hours or close. Fewer students and families in our state will have access to afterschool programs if this funding is not reinstated.

Closing: Reinforce the primary asks and thank them!

- Thank you again for your time. We hope you will support afterschool by increasing funding for 21st CCLC by \$750 million for FY2026, bringing the total to just over \$2 billion, to serve more children and help programs keep up with growing costs. This will build on the recent investments made by Congress and ensure that our kids have safe and enriching environments to go after school.
- We are here as a resource any time you are looking for information or a program to visit.
- Everyone should send a thank you note after the meeting.