

## **Talking to Congress about Afterschool – Sample Script** ***Afterschool for All Challenge – June 7, 2017***

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 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and instead support funding for afterschool through 21<sup>st</sup> 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 increasing funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center initiative and the Child Care Development Block Grant in the 2017 omnibus spending bill in April.

**We're here to ask you to sustain these investments by supporting funding for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and CCDBG in fiscal year 2018 – \_\_\_\_\_**

**DEMAND**

- Please increase funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) initiative by \$108 million for FY2018, bringing the total to \$1.3 billion and allowing 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.
- We know this is a very difficult funding process this year and realize you have very difficult decisions to make. We also realize some want to eliminate 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC. We ask that you make funding 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC one of your priorities.
- Current funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) initiative covers the costs associated with quality afterschool and summer learning programs for 1.6 million children. However, 9.6 million eligible students would be in a program if one were available to them. Funding lags way behind the need. 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.

## Talking to Congress about Afterschool

- Funding afterschool and summer learning programs is a cost-effective investment that has the multiple benefits of providing a lifeline to working families, keeping young people safe and secure and increasing student success. Please fund 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC at the \$1.3 billion level to help meet the demand for quality programs and to address rising expenses associated with hiring and retaining trained program staff. The evidence that these programs work is clear. In addition, the federal support for afterschool infrastructure that is then leveraged by local businesses, nonprofits, partners, volunteers, schools and others cannot be easily replaced by other supports.
- We also support an increase of \$1.1 billion for the Child Care Development Fund to implement the changes to CCDF made during reauthorization in December 2014. Roughly one-third of children served through CCDF are school-aged and participate in afterschool programs.

### Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and afterschool and summer learning programs is critical –

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- 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.***

### ACHIEVEMENT

- Afterschool programs help working families, keep kids safe during the hours after school when juvenile crime peaks, and improve students' academic achievement. These programs also provide children with physical activity and engage them in their learning (increasing school day attendance and reducing problematic behaviors in the classroom).

### ECONOMIC NEED

- As the economy struggles, the need is greater than ever – parents are relying more and more on afterschool programs, not only to keep their kids safe and nourished with healthy snacks or afterschool meals, but to help parents keep their jobs by working beyond 3 p.m.
- Meanwhile, it's becoming harder for families to afford afterschool programs or the transportation costs to get there. As programs struggle with state and local budgets cuts and shrinking private donations, programs are being forced to reduce services, increase fees, and even shut their doors, just when families need their support most.
- ***If you have youth advocates as members of your group, let them talk about what afterschool means to them and how participation has positively affected them and their families.***

## Talking to Congress about Afterschool

We hope that you'll also support opportunities for K-12 students to access afterschool Science, Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) programs by co-sponsoring or supporting passage of HR 2353 the *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*, bipartisan legislation to strengthen and improve career and technical education (Perkins/CTE). In the Senate please support bipartisan CTE legislation.

- The bill allows funding of school-community partnerships to help middle school and high school students gain the knowledge and skills they need for in-demand jobs including those in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.
- Hands-on career and technology education and STEM education that is provided during afterschool and summer learning programs helps expose young people to potential STEM careers and encourages students to pursue STEM as part of their coursework.
- The more students participate in STEM opportunities after school, the more interested they become in these important subjects (Wai et al 2010)
- Furthermore, 75 percent of Nobel Prize winners in the sciences report that their passion for science was first sparked in non-school environments (Friedman & Quinn, 2006).

Lastly, join the Afterschool Caucus - \_\_\_\_\_  
(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 requests at the end of the meeting — \_\_\_\_\_

- We ask you to support the *Afterschool for All Challenge* and work with us to ensure that all children have access to afterschool programs. Study after study has found that quality afterschool programs give students the academic, social and professional skills they need to succeed in school, work and life. There aren't nearly enough afterschool programs across the country to meet the need.
- We urge you to support funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers. 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.

Please support afterschool by increasing funding for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC by \$108 million for FY2018, bringing the total to \$1.3 billion and allowing approximately 100,000 additional children to be served.

Wrap-up and next steps — \_\_\_\_\_

- Wrap up the meeting by thanking the staff person or Member again for his or her 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. Offer yourself as a resource any time they are looking for information or a program to visit.
- Mention *Lights On Afterschool* on Oct. 26, 2017, and raise the possibility of your Member participating in your event.