



# Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

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May 22, 2014

Dear Member of Congress:

The Afterschool Alliance is dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children.

Today, more than 200 parents, young people, educators and state and community leaders are walking the halls of Congress, while hundreds more are meeting in Congressional district offices, to encourage Congress to support efforts to make quality afterschool and summer learning programs accessible to the children, families and communities that rely on them. **The FY2015 appropriations processes offer an opportunity for you and your colleagues in Congress to continue to provide funding for two federal funding streams that support afterschool and summer learning:**

- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC)**
- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)**

While the nation faces serious budget challenges, any reduction in federal spending should not come at the expense of investing in our children. As you and your colleagues roll up your sleeves to tackle difficult budget and education reform issues, we urge you to keep in mind the role of community partners and afterschool programs in helping students succeed. A decade ago, a bipartisan commitment to quality afterschool programs was included in the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). In recent years, Congress has maintained that commitment by investing in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, which now provide more than one million children in 11,000 communities with safe, high-quality before-school, afterschool and summer learning opportunities critical to their success in school and in life.

Yet even with the current funding, the demand for affordable, quality afterschool experiences far exceeds the availability. *America After 3 PM*, a national survey of 30,000 households, found that while afterschool programs are serving more young people than ever, the number of unsupervised children in the United States has increased. **More than 18 million children have parents who would like to enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available.** Parents of all income levels already pay more than 75 percent of the total cost of afterschool programs. Additionally, between 2002 and 2010, only 1 in 3 applicants for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers funding were awarded grants. Insufficient funding over the years is estimated to have left 36,000 communities and 3.6 million children and youth without access to afterschool programs. A 2012 survey of afterschool program providers found that close to 9 in 10 programs reported that there were children in their community who need afterschool, but are unable to access it. Maintaining or increasing funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC initiative and CCDF will leverage the fees paid by parents to meet the growing demand for quality afterschool programs.



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Additionally, reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act presents an opportunity to further strengthen the federal commitment to afterschool programs by taking several key actions. **Please co-sponsor the bipartisan *Afterschool for America's Children Act* (S. 326 and HR 4086) to strengthen the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC initiative as part of the ESEA reauthorization process.** The bills reauthorize the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program and support quality afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs that enhance and complement the school day through engaging, hands-on, experiential learning activities.

In addition to co-sponsoring the *Afterschool for America's Children Act* and supporting afterschool program funding in the FY2015 appropriations processes, **I hope that as Congress considers reauthorization of the programs governed by the America COMPETES Act, you will ensure that funding for afterschool and summer learning STEM programs is integral to the portfolio of federal investments in STEM education.** High-quality STEM afterschool programs produce positive outcomes for youth, including improved attitudes toward STEM fields and careers; increased STEM capacities and skills; and higher likelihood of graduation and pursuing a STEM career.

We need to do better for children and parents. Afterschool programs keep kids safe, improve academic performance and help working families across America. Studies have shown that quality programs give students the academic, social and career-ready skills they need to succeed. Students who regularly attend have better grades and behavior in school; better peer relations and emotion well-being; and lower incidences of drug-use, violence and unintended pregnancy. Most recently, a 2013 study out of University of California, Irvine's School of Education found that regular participation in afterschool programs helped to narrow the achievement gap between high-income and low-income students in math, improved academic and behavioral outcomes, and reduced school absences.

As a nation, we expect schools, communities and families to work together to keep our children safe before, during and after school hours. Afterschool programs have a proven track record of bringing together community resources to keep young people safe, help working families and provide a wide range of learning experiences that complement the school day. Please support a continued investment in the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC initiative and CCDF. Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Jodi Grant  
Executive Director

For more information, visit [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

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