



STATEMENT OF JODI GRANT
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Bush Budget Proposal Will Leave Millions of Children Without the Afterschool Programs They Need

“It is disappointing that President Bush today missed his last chance to make good on the promise of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Instead, he sustained a series of painful freezes and cuts that have left the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative unable to serve millions of children. *No Child Left Behind* authorized \$2.5 billion for 21st CCLC next year. The President instead proposed \$981 million – far short of the promise of *No Child Left Behind* and more than \$20 million in real cuts to the funding provided in 2002. If Congress accepts the President’s proposal, millions of children will be unsupervised each afternoon.

The afterschool community recognizes that there is great pressure on the federal budget, but afterschool programs are a wise investment. They keep kids safe and healthy, inspire children to learn, help working families, and reduce teen pregnancy, substance abuse, juvenile crime and gang involvement. Leaving millions of youth unsupervised each afternoon is shortsighted and costly, and results in harm that can last a lifetime.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* established a multi-year roadmap for slow but steady growth in afterschool funding, reflecting what was then, and remains now, a national consensus that afterschool programs need to be expanded. The afterschool appropriation President Bush proposed today will mean thousands of fewer spots in afterschool programs for our children. We urge Congress to grow rather than cut the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative so it can meet the needs of more children, youth, families and communities.

More than 14 million kindergarten through 12th-graders take care of themselves after the school day ends, including almost four million middle school students. Too many become involved in gangs, crime, drugs and alcohol, and sexual activity – problems afterschool programs help solve. The Afterschool Alliance will work with parents, educators, religious and community leaders, businesses and others to convince lawmakers to increase funding for afterschool programs in FY 2007. Our children, our families, deserve nothing less.”

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by the year 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.