



STATEMENT OF JODI GRANT
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Children Deserve Better

Nation's Top Afterschool Advocate Urges Congress to Discount President's Afterschool Budget Proposal & Instead Increase Spending

“It is disappointing that President Bush today proposed just \$981 million for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in FY 08. That is not nearly enough to meet the needs of our children and families. We understand that these are tight budgetary times, but if Congress accepts the President’s proposal, more than 14 million kindergarten through 12th-graders will continue to be unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends. That is simply unacceptable.

Our children deserve better. We ask the new Congress to increase funding for afterschool next year. The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st CCLC in FY 07. Instead of following that roadmap, lawmakers have adopted a series of freezes and cuts that have left the initiative badly underfunded. The \$981 million the President proposes for FY 08 is more than \$20 million in real cuts to the funding provided in 2002.

There is a national consensus that afterschool programs should be expanded. A 2006 election survey found that 72 percent of voters agree that ‘our newly elected public officials in Congress should increase funding for afterschool programs,’ and just 24 percent disagree. But strong public support has not brought adequate funding from lawmakers – and programs are struggling. A 2006 web survey found that many programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet demand, and budget cuts and stagnation are taking a toll. Many programs have made deep cuts, and leaders say future funding is insecure.

Afterschool programs are a wise and worthwhile investment. Research shows that afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, help working families, and reduce teen pregnancy, substance abuse, juvenile crime and gang involvement. That’s why states with Republican and Democratic governors – from California to Connecticut and New Mexico to Missouri to South Carolina – are increasing their afterschool spending. The federal government must do the same as federal dollars are critical to leveraging additional state, local and private funds for afterschool programs. We urge Congress to protect our children by increasing 21st CCLC spending next year.”

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