



Statement of Jodi Grant
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President's Proposed Afterschool Cut is 'Serious Mistake,' 'Disastrous for Afterschool'

“The President’s budget proposal for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, reported in *Education Daily* today, is a serious mistake that would be disastrous for afterschool programs receiving federal funds – and for America’s children and families. It has two fatal flaws: First, the proposal unwisely cuts funding by 27 percent from this year’s level, denying afterschool programs to hundreds of thousands of children who urgently need them. Second, it converts the very successful 21st Century initiative to a risky and unwise voucher program.

This is the second time President Bush has proposed a severe cut to afterschool programs. In 2003, a similar proposal touched off a tidal wave of grassroots support for afterschool programs. The resulting bipartisan effort led to the proposal’s defeat by a Republican-controlled Congress. The President’s afterschool proposal this year deserves to be immediately dismissed. With millions of children unsupervised after school, funding for these programs should go up, not down. That’s what the President agreed to in the *No Child Left Behind* law he continues to tout, it’s what America’s children and families need, and it’s what the Afterschool Alliance calls on Congress to provide.

A voucher program for afterschool would undermine existing public, private and community partnerships that are working well, and destabilize afterschool programs by making their funding even more precarious. 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees receive federal support that lasts three to five years, giving programs the chance to build quality and leverage community resources. A voucher system that encourages students to migrate in and out of programs, taking funding with them as they come and go, would pull the rug out from under quality programs that are currently serving families in need. Moreover, the conversion to a voucher program is aimed at solving a problem that doesn’t exist. Community organizations, including faith-based groups, are already eligible for and active participants in 21st Century grants. There is no benefit to such a radical overhaul.

If Congress agrees to this devastating proposal, millions of children and families that need quality afterschool programs will lose. Study after study has found that afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Americans know it, which is why they support increased funding for afterschool in overwhelming numbers. Congress must reject this proposal.”

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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. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.