



NEWS RELEASE
June 18, 2012

CONTACT: Johanna Diaz
202/371-1999

Afterschool Leader Calls Appropriations Bill “Disappointing”

*Harkin Bill Would Put Millions of Working Families
Who Rely on Afterschool Programs at Risk*

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) language in the Fiscal Year 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill is sad and disappointing for children and working families that rely on quality afterschool programs. If Congress were to adopt it, states could divert 21st CCLC afterschool funds to extend the school day, putting countless afterschool programs at risk for closing. That would mean more students unsupervised in the afternoons and without hands-on learning, tutoring, mentoring, physical fitness and other opportunities; and more working parents without safe, supervised, educational activities for their children after the school day ends and before they get home from work.

Appropriations language should not be used to make a major and controversial change to current law, and is not the place to resolve this issue.

Using afterschool funds to extend the school day is deeply controversial. More than 20 states have rejected the Department of Education’s invitation to divert 21st CCLC funding to extended day programs. For more than a decade, 21st CCLC funds have been used for before-school, afterschool and summer programs. Meanwhile, the evidence base for extended learning is inconclusive at best. Diverting afterschool funds to extended learning programs that in many cases only keep schools open for another 45 to 90 minutes is a huge gamble with our children’s future. Congress should thoroughly test extended day programs using school reform funding streams that are already supporting the creation of extended day programs, rather than plundering a funding stream that supports afterschool programs that work.

Quality afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They are hugely popular because they are effective. While we were pleased to see the Senate Appropriations Committee increase funding for Child Care and Development Block Grants, Promise Neighborhoods, Title I and Community Development Block Grants, we intend to activate the field – the parents of the more than eight million children who attend afterschool programs, the millions of families that have benefited from them, and the majority of voters who strongly support them – to encourage lawmakers to reject this effort to divert afterschool and summer program funds.

At a time when resources are so scarce, funding is best spent where we know it will make a difference. Afterschool and summer programs work.”

###

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.