



Statement of Jodi Grant
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Obama Budget Proposal for Afterschool Will Leave Millions of Youth At-Risk, Grant Warns

“With respect to afterschool programs, President Obama’s Fiscal Year 2011 budget is a bitter disappointment. This is more than a funding freeze; it is a setback. The President’s proposal to divert funds from afterschool programs by putting them in competition for grants with the Full Service Community Schools Program will effectively cut the funding available for the afterschool programs that children and families across the nation rely upon.

This is the second budget the President has submitted that did nothing to fulfill his campaign pledge to double spending for afterschool. Without the increase in funding that candidate Obama promised for afterschool, millions of children will have no safe, supervised, educational activities after the school day ends – and millions of working and job-seeking parents will go without the care their children need. Inadequate afterschool funding puts millions of children at risk for drugs and alcohol, gangs and other crime, teen pregnancy, and other unhealthy behaviors every single weekday afternoon.

The unmet need for afterschool in this country is enormous. A 2009 survey of nearly 30,000 households, sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund for the Afterschool Alliance, found that 26 percent of America’s children (15.1 million kids) are on their own in the afternoons – an increase of 800,000 since 2004. The parents of 18 million kids say they would enroll their children if afterschool programs were available. Too often, they aren’t.

The afterschool programs we do have are hurting, and in too many cases, contracting. Current funding for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative is less than half the \$2.5 billion authorized several years ago, which itself is a fraction of what is needed to make afterschool programs available to all children who need them. A survey of program leaders conducted last spring by the Afterschool Alliance found that some programs that were struggling before the recession are closing their doors, and many others are being forced to reduce the number of children they serve, cut hours and staff, and provide many fewer activities and supports for students who are in greater need than ever.

The President’s proposed increases for child care and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) funding are encouraging, and we hope and expect those funds will be available to afterschool programs. Nevertheless, more than 18 million children would be in afterschool programs if they were available and the President’s budget provides funding for only a tiny fraction of them.

The President's proposal also discusses several reforms to the 21st CCLC initiative that the Administration intends to advance during the reauthorization process. Several of those proposals are troubling, and we look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to make sure the new authorization bill is fully supportive of afterschool programs.

Research clearly demonstrates that quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. Congress should ignore the President's proposal and provide more funds for afterschool programs in FY 2011."

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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.