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Preserving Afterschool in ESEA Is a ‘Huge Win for America’s Children and Families,’ Afterschool Leader Says

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“We applaud and thank Congress for maintaining 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) as an independent program in the [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\), which was made public today](#). ESSA is compromise legislation that will reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Preserving this dedicated funding stream means millions of students and families will benefit from the quality afterschool and summer learning programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. This is a huge and much-needed win for America’s children and families.

The bill unveiled today preserves and strengthens 21st CCLC, using language that Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Patty Murray (D-WA) and Rep. Dan Kildee (D-MI) have championed in their bill, the Afterschool for America’s Children Act, which afterschool experts strongly support. The field is particularly grateful to Sens. Murkowski, Al Franken (D-MN) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) for spearheading the Senate effort to restore the program, which was eliminated in the original Senate and House ESEA bills.

We also thank Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Murray and Reps. John Kline (R-MN) and Bobby Scott (D-VA) for including the important Senate language in the final conference bill. Its inclusion in reauthorization will mean: more students safe and constructively engaged after the school days ends; more parents able to hold jobs; more children from food-insecure families getting healthy meals and snacks; more girls and boys inspired by hands-on learning of science, technology, engineering and math; and more youth getting homework help, job and college preparation, and opportunities for physical activity, community service and more.

The preservation of 21st CCLC was by no means a certainty, and we thank every champion for including it in the final conference report. More than 670 local, state and national organizations wrote to Congress in support of 21st CCLC and thousands of afterschool providers, education and business leaders, parents, students, community leaders and others also spoke out for afterschool programs in ways that made an enormous difference.

Students, families, communities, our educational system and our country will be better off when ESEA is reauthorized – but there is more work to do. One in five students in our country today is unsupervised after the school day ends and [for every child in an afterschool program, two more are waiting to get in](#). The \$1 billion authorization level in FY2017 is not nearly sufficient to meet the need. It is a fraction of what was authorized in No Child Left Behind more than a decade ago, less than the current appropriation, and dramatically less than what is needed. We will not stop

working until funding levels are raised and all children have access to the quality afterschool and summer learning programs they need and deserve.”

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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.