



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Monticello Middle School Student, Riley Ellis, Returns to Washington After Sharing Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.**

Washington, D.C. – Monticello Middle School student, 14-year-old Riley Ellis, who attends the Youth and Family Link’s Explorers Club afterschool program, and her mom Kimberly Ellis spent part of this week meeting with U.S. Senators and Representatives and their aides to discuss the importance of investing in afterschool and summer learning programs for youth. The Ellis family came to Washington, D.C. for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). Riley was one of just six afterschool students from five states selected to travel to the annual event.

On Wednesday, Riley shared her experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with members of Congress, emphasizing how her program helps her complete her homework on time and broaden her horizons by helping in the school’s community garden. Riley’s trip was in collaboration with [Schools Out Washington](#) and the Afterschool Alliance.

“The 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program has helped Riley develop friendships, learn new skills like cooking and gardening, as well as helped her get excited about school,” said Riley’s mother Kimberly Ellis. “In fact, she is now on grade level and won an attendance award thanks in great part to the 21st CCLC program.”

The Afterschool for All Challenge is an annual event that brings together afterschool program providers and experts, along with students, to showcase some of the innovative activities their afterschool programs provide.

“Students like Riley and parents like Kimberly speak so eloquently about the kinds of innovative, hands-on learning activities that quality afterschool programs offer students,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “These programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. They help young people discover their passions and have fun while they learn. We need to increase public and private funding so all students can take advantage of the opportunities afterschool and summer learning programs provide.”

Afterschool providers, educators, community leaders, parents and youth from 46 states visited Washington, D.C. this week as part of the Afterschool for All Challenge. Congress will soon

begin working on the federal budget for the next fiscal year; President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2018.

Participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004, according to [the America After 3PM household survey](#) of 30,000 U.S. families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs has increased as well. Today, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two more whose parents say they would participate, if a program were available. One in five students in the country today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

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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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*