



NEWS RELEASE
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In Unusual Bipartisan Move, All 14 Women Senators Urge President Bush to Increase Federal Afterschool Funding

Women Senators Send Letter to Bush Today

Washington, DC -- A bipartisan group of all 14 of the U.S. Senate's women today sent a letter to President Bush urging him to increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in his Fiscal Year 2006 budget proposal. The 21st CCLC initiative is the principal federal funding mechanism for afterschool programs. It has been flat-funded for four years, despite increases authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The women Senators' letter notes that, "increased funding would have a huge impact on the well-being of American children." Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) organized it, and Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA), Blanche L. Lincoln (D-AR), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) signed on.

"This letter is one more indication that lawmakers increasingly recognize that Americans want greater funding for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, inspire children to learn and help working families," said Alliance Interim Executive Director Jen Rinehart. "Our nation would benefit greatly if the President increased afterschool funding in next year's budget." A recent poll by Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates, Inc. found that 76 percent of voters, and 74 percent of Republicans, support increased afterschool funding "even if it leads to a tax increase."

The 21st CCLC initiative today serves some 1.3 million children. According to *America After 3 PM*, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America's children spend their afternoons, 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves after the school day ends. The parents of more than 15 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available. JCPenney Afterschool funded the study for the Afterschool Alliance.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information and the letter itself are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org

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