



NEWS RELEASE
January 3, 2006

CONTACT: Lisa Lederer
202/371-1999

All 14 Women Senators Urge President Bush To Increase Federal Afterschool Funding

Bipartisan Group of Women Senators Send Letter to Bush Today

Washington, DC -- All 14 women Senators 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 2007 budget. The 21st CCLC initiative is the principal federal funding mechanism for afterschool programs. It has been flat-funded for five years, and subjected to several across-the-board cuts. To date, none of the increases authorized by the *No Child Left Behind Act* have been realized.

The women Senators' letter says, in part, "the demand for affordable, quality afterschool programs far exceeds the availability of these programs... The 21st CCLC program has been level funded for five consecutive years. If this trend continues, it will become more difficult for the 21st CCLC program to meet the needs of children currently served, and it will prevent the program from growing to reach more children." In fact, an Afterschool Alliance study released in December found that 26 states could not make any new grants to afterschool programs this year because of the federal funding freeze.

Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) organized the letter, 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.

"We urge the President to listen to the women Senators, and to the millions of Americans who want more funding for the afterschool programs that keep our children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Families, communities and our nation will all win if the President increases afterschool funding next year. We know that scarce resources are forcing lawmakers to make tough choices, but investing in our children always pays off."

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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. The J. C. Penney Co., Inc 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/press_archives/Women_Senate_Letter_FY07.pdf

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