

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 3, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge you to support increased funding in your fiscal year 2007 budget proposal for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) so the program can grow, and the 15 million children who come home afterschool to an empty house can have the option of high-quality, safe, afterschool learning activities.

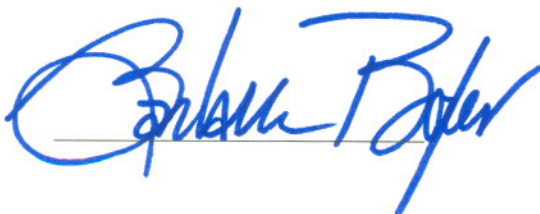
The federal afterschool program, which currently serves 1.3 million children, is vital to children and families across America. Afterschool programs provide safe and enriching environments for children after the end of the school day.

Numerous studies confirm what parents and community leaders already know -- afterschool programs keep children safe, reduce crime and drug use, and improve academic performance. In fact, according to the Rose Institute at Claremont McKenna College, every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves taxpayers \$3 in increased performance and compensation and reduced school costs and crime.

The demand for affordable, quality afterschool programs far exceeds the availability of these programs. Mayors surveyed in 86 cities reported that only one-third of the children needing afterschool care were receiving it. The need for afterschool programs is even more acute in rural areas.

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 the children currently served, and it will prevent the program from growing to reach more children. For these reasons, we urge you to propose an increase in funding for this vital program so that more children can receive the proven benefits of quality afterschool programs.

Sincerely,



Blanch L. Linsch

Irene Neubauer

Mary L. Lansuit

Elizabeth Dole

Rellie Stetson

Prudence Stein

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Patty Murray

Maria Carmichael

Robert A. McAdams

Allyson Jones

Kay Bailey Hutchison