



NEWS RELEASE
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Toppenish 11th Grader Marisol Romero Shared Views on Afterschool Programs with Officials in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. –Toppenish 11th grader, Marisol Romero, who attends the [21st Century at Safe Haven Community Center](#), spent part of last 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. Marisol came to Washington, D.C. for the annual Afterschool for All Challenge, organized by the [Afterschool Alliance](#).

On Thursday, Marisol shared her experiences and perspectives on afterschool programs with staff from U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell’s offices and U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse’s staff. In each meeting Marisol emphasized the ways afterschool programs, specifically the one at Safe Haven, has broadened her horizons in the 12 years she’s attended.

Marisol is one of five Youth Afterschool Ambassadors from four states: Missouri, Oklahoma, Washington, Wisconsin. She designed a book which showcased the value of afterschool programs. Marisol shared it with Members of Congress and their staff at an Afterschool Expo on Capitol Hill Wednesday. Marisol was accompanied to D.C. and mentored during this school year by Beth Monfils, the Program Coordinator of 21st Century and an alumna of the Afterschool Alliance’s long-running Afterschool Ambassador program, geared toward afterschool providers.

“Being a Youth Ambassador was a memorable experience,” said Marisol. “This experience has caused me to seriously consider running for office one day.”

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

This year afterschool providers and educators from all 50 states visited Washington, D.C. to meet with their elected officials. President Trump is proposing to eliminate federal funding for afterschool programs in 2019, a decision that would eliminate afterschool programs for 1.7 million youth, including the 21st Century Community Learning Center funded program that Marisol attends.

The [America After 3PM](#) household survey of more than 30,000 families, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance, found that participation in afterschool programs has increased to 10.2 million students nationwide, up from 6.5 million in 2004. 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. Unmet demand is

especially high in rural communities and communities of concentrated poverty. One in five students in the United States today is unsupervised after the school day ends.

A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates improvements in attendance, behavior, academic achievement and more among children in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that afterschool programs encourage increased parental involvement – an important building block for student success.

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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.