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

Dear President Bush,

We are writing to express our strong support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) after-school program and respectfully request that your fiscal year (FY) 2005 budget provide $2 billion for the program. Over the past several years, the United States has made the education and safety of our children a national priority. No federal effort better epitomizes this combined mission than the 21st CCLC.

As you know, the parents of more than 28 million school-age children work outside the home, and as many as 15 million "latchkey children" return to an empty house on any given afternoon. It is during these after-school hours that children are more likely to be involved in crime, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors. Studies have shown that after-school programs are an effective way to improve academic achievement, support working families, and prevent kids from being both victims and perpetrators of violent crime.

Since 1998, the 21st CCLC has provided more than $4.5 billion to support after-school activities across the country. Experts estimate that for each $1 invested in after-school programs taxpayers save $3 per at-risk youth by diverting them from a life of crime. Statistics also make clear that the public strongly supports the federal government’s investments in the 21st CCLC.

According to the Afterschool Alliance’s sixth Annual Voters Poll, which was performed by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrant Group, voters are committed to after-school programs. The survey found that 94 percent of likely voters agree that there should be organized activities or places for children and teens to go every day that provide opportunities to learn. Furthermore, despite the current fiscal crisis, voters and taxpayers indicated a strong willingness to increase what they pay in taxes if the money went to a trust fund established to provide secure funding for after-school programs.

A Mason-Dixon poll also firmly established working mothers’ support—reporting that nine in ten agreed with the statement: “America could greatly reduce youth violence if Congress expanded prevention efforts like after-school programs.” And when asked which strategy would be more effective in reducing school and youth violence, seven out of ten mothers chose investments in after-school programs over investments in security measures like metal detectors.
Despite the broad, bipartisan support for the 21st CCLC, your FY 2004 budget included little more than one-third of the amount authorized for the program in the No Child Left Behind Act. While we are pleased that both the House and Senate education appropriations committees restored funding for the 21st CCLC to $1 billion, it is time to break the three-year deadlock on stagnant funding for the program.

The 21st CCLC program is a key investment in our children’s future, supporting after-school programs that combine academic, character-building, and enrichment activities in safe environments. That is why we respectfully request that you allocate $2 billion, the amount authorized, for the 21st CCLC program in your FY 2005 budget. Not only will this federal investment help schools and communities expand their after-school programming, but it will help leverage more local, private, and philanthropic dollars — further improving the lives of children during the after-school hours.

With strains on the economy and more parents working longer hours to make ends meet, we believe now is the time to fully fund the 21st CCLC. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nita Lowey
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress

Anibal Acevedo-Vilá
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress

Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

Susan Davis
Member of Congress

Sander Levin
Member of Congress
The Honorable George W. Bush

James McGovern
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Boo Filner
Member of Congress

Michael McNulty
Member of Congress

Neil Abercrombie
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Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Timothy Bishop
Member of Congress

Tom Udall
Member of Congress

Mike Ross
Member of Congress

Dennis Moore
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Joseph Hoefeld
Member of Congress

Lincoln Davis
Member of Congress

Fortney Pete Stark
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Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

Lynn C.C. Woolsey
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
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Donald Payne
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Ruben Hinojosa
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Jim Davis
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Martin Meehan
Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah
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Dale Kildee
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Emanuel Cleaver
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Julia Carson
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Donna Christensen
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Rahm Emanuel
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