



Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

February 27, 2012

The Honorable George Miller
Ranking Member, House Education and the Workforce Committee
United States Congress
2101 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of the 8.4 million children actively participating in afterschool programs, and our network of more than 26,000 afterschool partners providing engaging learning opportunities in all 50 states, I am writing in support of reauthorizing and maintaining the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative that is dedicated to expanded learning opportunities like afterschool and summer learning programs. The Afterschool Alliance does not support the approach taken in HR 3990, the *Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act* which proposes a block grant to states for a diverse set of purposes and does not reauthorize the 21st CCLC initiative, which could lead to over 1.1 million students losing access to programs that keep students safe, engage young people in their own education and help working families.

The 21st CCLC initiative is currently the only funding stream dedicated exclusively to before school, afterschool and summer learning programs in order to provide engaging learning opportunities through partnerships between community-based organizations and schools. Currently more than 15 million children are on their own after school, a full quarter of the school-age population, and the parents of 18 million children would enroll their children in a program if one were available or affordable, according to the 2009 report *America After 3PM*. Under current law, the 21st CCLC initiative provides programming to just over 1 million students.

Programs like those provided through the 21st CCLC initiative are critical to ensuring success for young people, both in school and in life. The research base clearly demonstrates the value of maintaining dedicated federal support for expanded learning opportunities, showing that these programs are having real, measurable results in the lives of students by improving academic achievement, keeping young people safe and helping working families:

- Ninth grade students who participate in afterschool programs funded by The After-School Corporation (TASC) had higher daily attendance and credit accumulation than matched nonparticipants.
- Annual performance report data from 21st CCLC grantees across the country demonstrated that students attending 21st CCLC programs improved their reading (43 percent) and math grades (42 percent). Students who attended more regularly were more likely to improve their grades and their performance on state assessments.
- Researchers at MDRC found that as little as 45 minutes of focused academic instruction during afterschool, using specially created materials, resulted in a statistically significant increase in students' math scores.
- The Promising Afterschool Programs Study, a study of about 3,000 low-income, ethnically-diverse elementary and middle school students conducted by researchers at the University of California at Irvine found that regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs is linked to significant gains in standardized test scores and work habits.
- A meta-analysis of 73 afterschool evaluations conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), concluded that afterschool programs employing evidence-based approaches to improving students' personal and social skills were consistently successful in producing multiple

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- benefits for youth including improvements in children's personal, social and academic skills, as well as their self-esteem.
- A study by Mahoney, J., Lord, H., & Carryl, E., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. measuring the health and social benefits of afterschool programs found that controlling for baseline obesity, poverty status, and race and ethnicity, the prevalence of obesity was significantly lower for afterschool program participants (21 percent) compared to nonparticipants (33 percent).
 - Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and they are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity. A study by the UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing found that children who attended LA's BEST were 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities than their peers who did not attend the program. Researchers estimate that every dollar invested in the LA's BEST program saves the city \$2.50 in crime-related costs.

While the proposed Local Academic Flexible Grant under HR 3990 does allow local education agencies to use federal funds for afterschool programs, it also allows in-school classroom activities to be supported by these same funds. At a time when local and state funding is declining, it is very likely that this grant would predominantly be used to fund activities during the school day. In the past three years the percentage of schools reducing or eliminating afterschool and weekend enrichment programs grew from 8 percent in the 2009-10 school year to a startling 24 percent last school year. Forgoing federal support for quality afterschool programs strips parents and students of the opportunity to participate in comprehensive programs that provide academics, enrichment and support services.

Low-income families, rural communities, programs providing older youth with career and college preparation, and efforts to engage young people in science, technology, engineering and math after the school day will be among the areas most impacted by an elimination of the 21st CCLC initiative. Consolidating funding previously dedicated to afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs, with funds intended for school-day activities will jeopardize the leveraged support of community based organizations and private partners as well as the overall academic achievement of the student participants.

I strongly urge the Committee to work on bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which includes a separate funding stream to be dedicated to expanded learning opportunities for children, like those provided by quality afterschool and summer learning programs. I look forward to working with you and your staff on such an effort.

Sincerely,

Jodi Grant
Executive Director