



Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

January 18, 2012

The Honorable John Kline
Chairman, House Education and the Workforce Committee
United States Congress
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kline:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act*. On behalf of the 8.4 million children actively participating in afterschool programs, I am concerned that the legislation does not reauthorize the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, which could lead to over 1.1 million students losing access to engaged learning programs that keep students safe, reinforce lessons taught during the school day and help working families.

The research base demonstrating significant outcomes from afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs has grown markedly over the past decade. These programs are 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 school 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.
- 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 benefits for youth, including improvements in children's personal, social and academic skills, as well as their self-esteem.
- A YMCA of the USA study found that teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes than teens who do



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participate. They are also three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity.

- A study by Brandeis University and Catalyst found that parents who are concerned about their children's afterschool care miss an average of eight days of work per year. Decreased worker productivity related to parental concerns about afterschool care costs businesses millions of dollars per year.

While the proposed Local Academic Flexible Grant 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. 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.

The second program under the new grant would allow community-based organizations and private entities to compete for funding that could support students outside of the school day. We are concerned, however, that the lack of guidance provided on the nature of activities and school-community partnerships eligible to receive this funding would not have the same impact as the current 21st CCLC initiative has in leveraging local resources and enhancing student success. Under the 21st CCLC initiative a unique prioritization on partnerships of schools, community-based organizations, faith-based groups and private companies has maximized the reach of the limited federal dollars appropriated. Currently, the federal government contributes only 11 percent of the cost of afterschool while the remaining budget is met by families and an average of six partners on existing 21st CCLC grants. Every dollar invested in afterschool programs saves taxpayers at least \$3 in costs associated with the justice system and loss of productivity.

I strongly urge the Committee to reauthorize the 21st CCLC program to allow for separate funding to be dedicated to before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs. 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 (STEM) after the school day will be among the areas most impacted by an elimination of the 21st CCLC initiative.

Sincerely,

Jodi Grant
Executive Director