**To: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_State Department of Education**

**From:**

**Re: Comments on State Intent to Apply for 21st CCLC Waiver under ED-2020-SCC-0141**

Dear Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Title IV B (21st CCLC) Director,

The (Program/network name) ***expresses our strong support for applying as quickly as feasible for the 21st CCLC waiver*** to allow SEAs to waive the definition of Community Learning Center(s) for implementation of services during “nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess)” in school year 2020-2021.

Students, families, and schools are struggling with a very different reality than the traditional school year and 21st CCLC programs are well-poised to help. The dual goals of keeping students and staff safe and healthy, and keeping students on track with learning, create a need for deepening partnerships between schools and the community. Operating during traditional school hours as a supplement to the virtual learning offered by the schools, 21st CCLC programs will be able to enhance their mission of supporting high need students at times when students are most vulnerable or most likely to require additional support to meet their educational goals, but only if enabled by the time-limited flexibility of the waiver.

During virtual school times, 21st CCLC funded afterschool programs are well positioned to:

* Supplement and complement school day learning;
* Work with schools and districts to coordinate safety protocols and cohorting strategies;
* Work locally in neighborhoods where student access to technology is most challenging;
* Work with small groups of students and maintain staff to student ratios that do not exceed those recommended by state and local authorities;
* Provide safe, supervised, educationally enriching spaces for development during virtual learning either at a school or community-based location;
* Ensure students have access to meals by leveraging USDA meal and snack programs on virtual learning days;
* Use lessons learned by the afterschool and summer community over the past 6 months, including while serving children of essential workers to apply safe interventions and practices, including use of personal protective equipment, temperature checks and any precautions recommended or required by local or state laws; and
* Connect with local families to help communicate school messages and requirements, navigate technology, and support additional needs.

Community based, responsive 21st CCLC programs have a history of success at improving student attendance, behavior, and coursework; bringing equitable enrichment opportunities to students and families and innovating to meet the needs of their communities. This waiver does not require every program to use the flexibility, some may not need or be able to and others may choose to continue to focus on their operations during the regular afterschool, before school, and summer hours. But, for our state and any program, district and community who do have the ability to consider or offer such expanded programming to meet their urgent needs during this time, the waiver ensures they have the flexibility to do so. Please provide 21st CCLC programs the opportunity to bring their expertise to bear at this critical time at all hours when their support may be essential to helping students have the tools necessary to succeed.

Sincerely,