

Afterschool WORKS!



Far too many students are in crisis, struggling with mental well-being, increased school absences, and academic losses. Afterschool and summer learning programs offer valuable supports to help. But, with the unmet demand for programs skyrocketing, millions of young people and families don't have programs available to them. For every child in a program, four are waiting to get in. And, many existing programs face staffing challenges, increased costs, and funding difficulties. Federal pandemic relief funding helped—supporting programs for an estimated 5 million students during the past three years. As that funding ends, however, these programs may close or reduce services.

Students continue to need the support of quality afterschool and summer learning programs. Increased federal funding can help ensure that all students who need programs have them. In the U.S. today, there are 25 million children who would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them.

1

Increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative to \$2.079 billion—an increase of \$750 million over the current level—to support quality afterschool, before-school, and summer learning opportunities across all 50 states. While 21st CCLC currently serves 1.3 million students, 11 million additional low-income students would participate in afterschool programs if they had access to one. With increased funding, more programs will be able to help students accelerate learning and support students' well-being. Students who regularly participate in 21st CCLC improve their school attendance, class participation and behavior, and reading and math grades. Consistent afterschool participation has been shown to narrow academic achievement gaps between high- and low-income students.

2

Increase federal funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant to ensure greater access to quality school-age care. 45 percent of children served through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) are school-aged, and include participants in afterschool and summer learning programs. Research published in the 2020 January/February volume of *Child Development* found that children who participated in both quality early childcare and afterschool programs saw a positive cumulative effect on their academic achievement in math and reading at age 15. CCDF also helps families in every state identify quality care by supporting program databases, and invests in program quality to ensure that each child has an enriching and welcoming environment when in care.

3

Support the needs of older youth through the Youth Workforce Readiness Act and reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

As Congress reauthorizes WIOA and seeks to prepare Americans for meaningful, in-demand job opportunities, accessible youth pathways to these jobs are needed. The bipartisan, bicameral Youth Workforce Readiness Act (S. 454/HR 3416) should be included as part of WIOA reauthorization and would fund and support afterschool and summer programs that focus on positive youth development as key partners in career pathway efforts.

5

Join the Afterschool Caucus and participate in *Lights On Afterschool in October*.

Stand with the members of Congress who are committed to supporting afterschool, before-school, and summer learning program opportunities. Experience afterschool first-hand at a local program during *Lights On Afterschool*, the nation's celebration of afterschool, this October.

4

Fulfill the promise of the CHIPS and Science Act and develop the associated workforce by maintaining funding for the National Science Foundation and its STEM Education Directorate.

In FY2024, the National Science Foundation was funded at \$9.06 billion—an 8 percent cut from the FY2023 level. The STEM Education Directorate bore \$199 million of that cut—a 15 percent cut for the Directorate compared to the previous year. The cut is a step back for informal STEM education and implementation of the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act and comes at a time when investments in STEM education and workforce development are more important than ever. Congress should reverse this trend and adequately fund both the National Science Foundation and the STEM Education Directorate.

For more information about joining the Senate Afterschool Caucus, Congressional offices may contact Co-chairs Sen. Murkowski (Alaska) and Sen. Smith (Minn.): Karen McCarthy at Karen_McCarthy@murkowski.senate.gov and Brennan Barber at Brennan_Barber@smith.senate.gov. The House Afterschool Caucus is in transition – Congressional offices are encouraged to contact Erik Peterson at epeterson@afterschoolalliance.org for more information.