Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

September 12, 2007

TO: Chairman George Miller
Ranking Member Buck McKeon

FR: Jodi Grant
Executive Director

RE: Recommended Changes to Title IV Discussion Draft

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide feedback on the House Education and Labor Committee Discussion Draft of Title IV. The comments below are specific to Section 402. 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

We commend the committee's support of afterschool shown by reauthorizing the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The 21st CCLC Program is a much needed resource with demonstrated results. Evaluations, including the U.S. Department of Education's own evaluation, show that the program is having measurable impact on children's academic achievement and behavior – raising children's reading and math scores, improving school attendance, increasing their class participation – all while making kids and communities safer by reducing vandalism and juvenile crime. Unfortunately, the program does not reach nearly enough children. Today, 14.3 million kindergartners to 12th graders are unsupervised and at risk at the end of the school day. At the current funding level, 21st CCLC programs are only able to serve approximately 7 percent of eligible children; even the current authorization level would only reach 17 percent of eligible children. Reauthorization is an opportunity for Congress to once again demonstrate its commitment to quality afterschool programs by calling for steadily increasing investments in the 21st CCLC Program.

Key to ensuring quality programs is the ability of states to invest in state-level supports, such as career pathways for professional development, credentials, and systems for the dissemination of best practices. Allowing states to use their training and technical assistance set aside for this type of infrastructure-building is a step in the right direction but we need to give states the resources, as well as the ability, to make these quality investments.

Lastly, we commend the committee for including the National Academy of Sciences Study in Section 4207. We agree that a study of this nature would be very valuable in determining alternate measures of student success. We request that funding for this effort be designated as a separate appropriation from that of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers so that the study does not come at the expense of services to children and youth.

We respectfully recommend the following changes be made:

1. Page 31, line 23 (B) – delete "by striking paragraph (2)" and add "delete paragraph (2)(A)"

RATIONALE: The Alliance has requested that grants be renewable at the discretion of the state. For that reason reference to programs previously funded needs to be retained in the statute.

2. Page 32, line 2 – after "is amended by" insert "in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking '3 percent' and inserting '5 percent'" and after "of the amount made available to the State" add "providing that sufficient funds are available for continuation awards to covered programs"

RATIONALE: As was stated earlier, we believe that the states play a critical role in assuring quality afterschool programming. Giving states the option to increase the set aside from 3 to 5 percent will make vital new resources available for strengthening professional development opportunities, expanding technical assistance to programs and disseminating successful practices throughout the State.

3. Page 33, line 8 – add "s" to period to read "may be renewed for periods of not less than 3 years and not more than 5 years contingent on.."

RATIONALE: Adding the letter "s" makes it clear that these are renewable awards.

4. Page 33, line 14 (3) add "insert after subparagraph (g) the following: (h) 'Nothing in this Part shall be interpreted to prohibit a state from renewing a recipient's grant, contingent on the recipient's performance during the previous grant having been satisfactory in terms of program design, quality, and the number of children served'"

RATIONALE: The Alliance supports giving states the clear authority to renew grant awards for successful, high quality programs.

5. Page 34, delete lines 7-13 and add

(1) "$2,500,000,000 for fiscal year 2008";
(2) "$2,750,000,000 for fiscal year 2009";
(3) "$3,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2010";
(4) "$3,250,000,000 for fiscal year 2011";
(5) "$3,500,000,000 for fiscal year 2012"; and
(6) "$3,750,000,000 for fiscal year 2013"

RATIONALE: The need for high-quality afterschool programs far exceeds available funding. The Alliance urges the committee to authorize substantial increased funding for the 21st CCLC Program in the future.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft legislation. Feel free to contact me or Erika Argersinger at 202-347-2030 or Ellin Nolan at 202-289-3900 with any questions regarding our recommendations.

Jodi Grant
Executive Director