

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

We are writing to express our strong support for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) after-school program and respectfully request that your fiscal year (FY) 2005 budget provide \$2 billion for the program. Over the past several years, the United States has made the education and safety of our children a national priority. No federal effort better epitomizes this combined mission than the 21st CCLC.

As you know, the parents of more than 28 million school-age children work outside the home, and as many as 15 million "latchkey children" return to an empty house on any given afternoon. It is during these after-school hours that children are more likely to be involved in crime, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors. Studies have shown that after-school programs are an effective way to improve academic achievement, support working families, and prevent kids from being both victims and perpetrators of violent crime.

Since 1998, the 21st CCLC has provided more than \$4.5 billion to support after-school activities across the country. Experts estimate that for each \$1 invested in after-school programs taxpayers save \$3 per at-risk youth by diverting them from a life of crime. Statistics also make clear that the public strongly supports the federal government's investments in the 21st CCLC.

According to the Afterschool Alliance's sixth Annual Voters Poll, which was performed by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and The Tarrance Group, voters are committed to after-school programs. The survey found that 94 percent of likely voters agree that there should be organized activities or places for children and teens to go every day that provide opportunities to learn. Furthermore, despite the current fiscal crisis, voters and taxpayers indicated a strong willingness to increase what they pay in taxes if the money went to a trust fund established to provide secure funding for after-school programs.

A Mason-Dixon poll also firmly established working mothers' support—reporting that nine in ten agreed with the statement: "America could greatly reduce youth violence if Congress expanded prevention efforts like after-school programs." And when asked which strategy would be more effective in reducing school and youth violence, seven out of ten mothers chose investments in after-school programs over investments in security measures like metal detectors.

Despite the broad, bipartisan support for the 21st CCLC, your FY 2004 budget included little more than one-third of the amount authorized for the program in the No Child Left Behind Act. While we are pleased that both the House and Senate education appropriations committees restored funding for the 21st CCLC to \$1 billion, it is time to break the three-year deadlock on stagnant funding for the program.

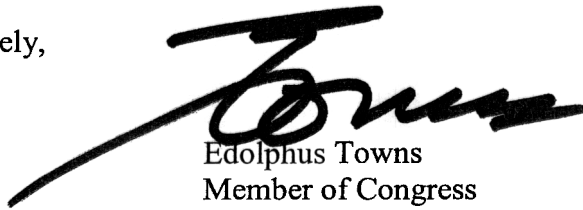
The 21st CCLC program is a key investment in our children's future, supporting after-school programs that combine academic, character-building, and enrichment activities in safe environments. That is why we respectfully request that you allocate \$2 billion, the amount authorized, for the 21st CCLC program in your FY 2005 budget. Not only will this federal investment help schools and communities expand their after-school programming, but it will help leverage more local, private, and philanthropic dollars – further improving the lives of children during the after-school hours.

With strains on the economy and more parents working longer hours to make ends meet, we believe now is the time to fully fund the 21st CCLC. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

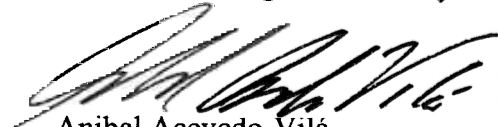
Sincerely,



Nita Lowey
Member of Congress



Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



Anibal Acevedo-Vilá
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



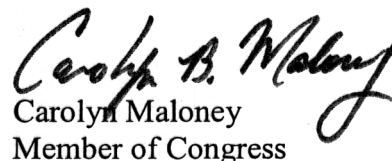
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



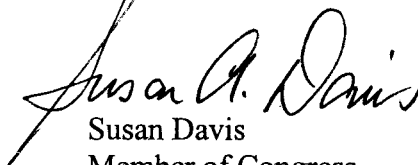
Bob Etheridge
Member of Congress



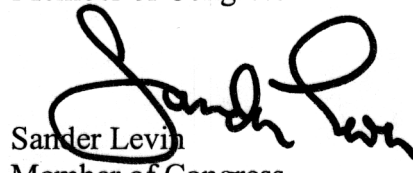
Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress



Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress



Susan Davis
Member of Congress



Sander Levin
Member of Congress



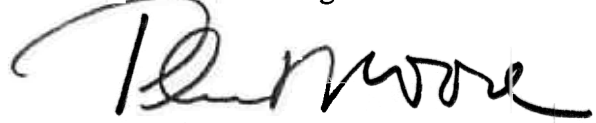
James McGovern
Member of Congress



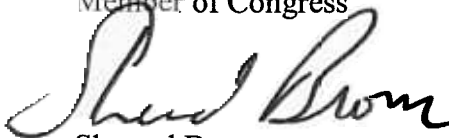
Mike Ross
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Dennis Moore
Member of Congress



Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress



Joseph Hoeffel
Member of Congress



Bob Filner
Member of Congress



Lincoln Davis
Member of Congress



Michael McNulty
Member of Congress



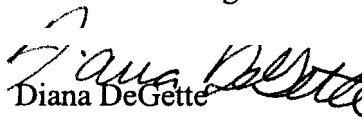
Portney Pete Stark
Member of Congress



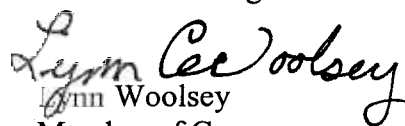
Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress




Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress



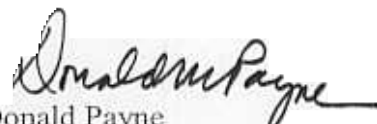
Timothy Bishop
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



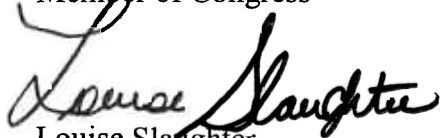
Tom Udall
Member of Congress



Donald Payne
Member of Congress



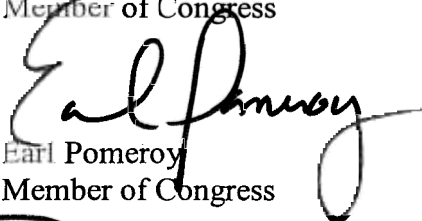
Bart Stupak
Member of Congress



Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress



Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



Earl Pomeroy
Member of Congress



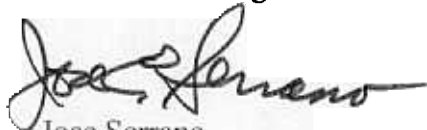
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



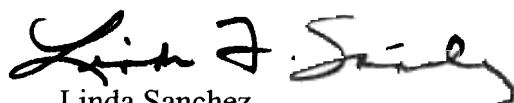
Shelley Berkley
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress



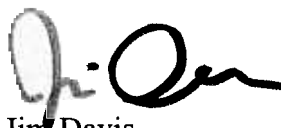
Jose Serrano
Member of Congress



Linda Sanchez
Member of Congress



Ruben Hinojosa
Member of Congress



Jim Davis
Member of Congress



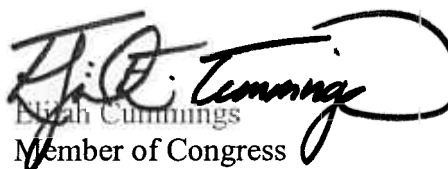
Martin Meehan
Member of Congress



Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress



Dale Kildee
Member of Congress



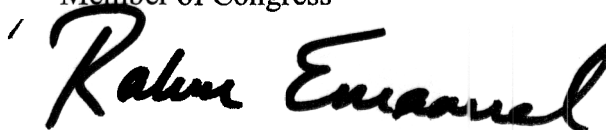
Elijah Cummings
Member of Congress



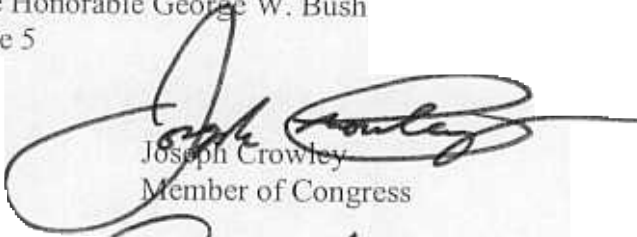
Julia Carson
Member of Congress



Donna Christensen
Member of Congress



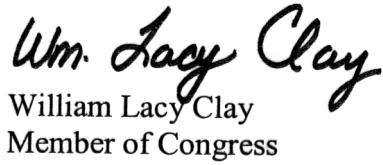
Rahm Emanuel
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



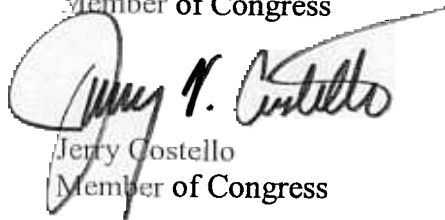
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



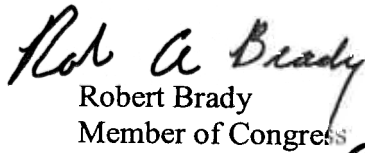
William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



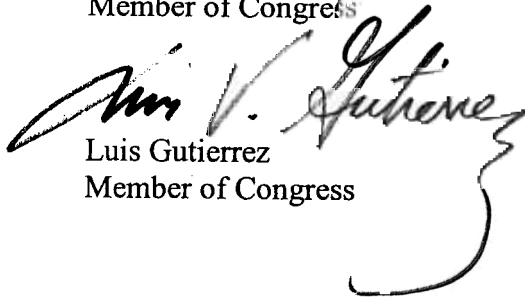
Hilda Solis
Member of Congress



Jerry Costello
Member of Congress



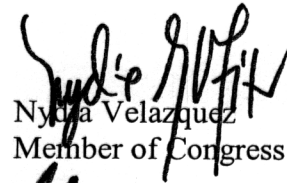
Robert Brady
Member of Congress



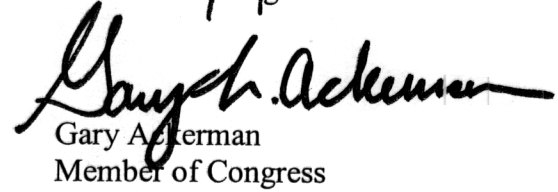
Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress



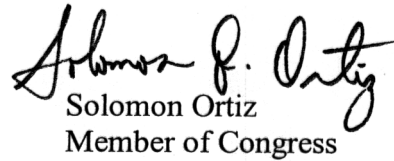
Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



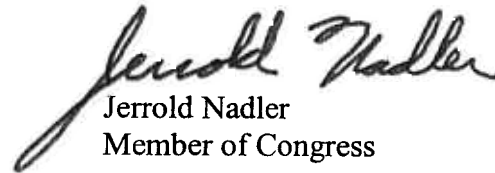
Nydia Velazquez
Member of Congress



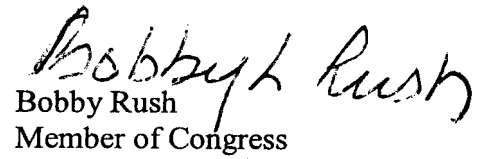
Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress



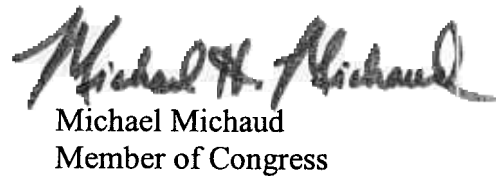
Solomon Ortiz
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Bobby Rush
Member of Congress



Michael Michaud
Member of Congress