

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2006

Senator Judd Gregg, Chairman  
Senator Kent Conrad, Ranking Member  
Committee on the Budget  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg and Ranking Member Conrad:

We are writing to urge you to support increased funding for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers as you consider the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget. Americans are relying on Congress to make badly needed funds available for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers so that more children will have the option of high-quality, safe, after-school learning activities critical to their success in school, in life, and to their parents' ability to work.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers are vital to children and working families across America. Studies show us that after-school programs keep children safe, increase their learning, and help working families. Students who regularly attend quality after-school programs have better grades and behavior in school, better peer relations and emotional adjustment, and lower incidences of drug-use, violence, and pregnancy. Last year, after-school programs served 1 million children. Still, over 14 million children currently have no place to go when the school day ends.

Four years ago, a bipartisan commitment to quality after-school programs was included in passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). If funded at the level authorized under the Act, over 2.4 million children would be served by afterschool programs. And yet, since passage, we have served -- at most -- only 1.4 million children due to the consistent underfunding of the program. Unfortunately, the President's Budget continues this trend by funding after-school at only \$981 million -- less than half of the \$2.5 billion authorized for this coming year. This gap will leave 2 million children without the after-school programs Congress and the President agreed to in NCLB.

Clearly, we need to do better by children and working parents when it comes to afterschool. In fact, I and many of our colleagues recently formed a bipartisan, bicameral caucus to build support for after-school programs in Congress, and to translate that support into appropriations sufficient to meet the growing demand for after-school. Currently, 33 Senators are Members of the Afterschool Caucus. Clearly, this is an issue many of us are deeply committed to. I am proud that so many of us are willing to stand behind the notion that we must do all we can to meet the needs of American children and families.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Dodd

Al Franken

Mark Warner

Allen S. Saxe

Barbara Boxer

Susan Collins

Robert C. Menendez

Jim Webb

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Patty Murray

Dietrich

105 / Berlin

Samuel K. Akata

Yvonne Stein

Tom F. Kerry

Max Bucco

Blanch L. Linsch

Rebbie Stenow

Maria Carbone

Frank R. Lautenberg

Herb Kohl

Steve Johnson

Mary Landrum

Ken Salazar

Chuck Schum Mark Dayton

Robert Merenzy. \_\_\_\_\_