Dear State Child Care Agency,

We are glad to see the CCDF Plan Pre-Print for 2022-2024 has become available for states to engage partners in the planning process. We, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the Statewide Afterschool Network for the state of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, see this as an opportunity to strengthen what the recent pandemic has shown to be one of the most critical sectors to a healthy modern society, child care for infant to school-age children. We look forward to being a partner in this work.

Statewide Afterschool Networks like ours, referenced throughout the pre-print plan (including Sec. 1.4.1 (a)(xvi) Coordination with Partners) focus on school-age program quality and access. Nationally, 44% of those served with CCDF funds are school aged. We see ourselves as a key part in the continuum of care that begins with quality early care and sustains learning gains and social and emotional supports for children as they age into early adolescence and beyond. This work also supports working parents as their young children enter school to ensure they continue to have a broad range of available, high quality options for care for their children before school, afterschool, and over the summer.

The goal stated in the CCDF plan of providing safe and engaging places for the learning and development of children while their parents work is foundational to our mission. We support staff through connections to training and professional development in the research based-field of positive youth development, helping them serve the distinct needs of 6 year olds or 10 year olds with appropriate developmental strategies. We help programs connect with school-age quality standards, best practice and high quality models and examples and resources and observational tools to improve their practice. And we help coordinate the school-age field through communication, surveys, maps of supply and demand and other data at the national and state level.

In looking at this pre-print for 2022-2024, some key areas along with plan section numbers where we might offer support include:

* Outreach to school-age providers and the public to inform of the plan *(Sec 1.3.3)*
* Interpreting school-age quality for the public including in the consumer education database (eg *Sec 2.3.6* which asks (a)(vi) about school age quality standards for the website
* Supporting the state to increase supply and accessibility to quality school age providers (*Sec 4.1.3* looks at equal access for CCDF children comparable to non- CCDF families) and identify barriers and shortages (*Sec 4.17*).
* Discussing what variations based on quality indicators such as school age standards might mean for the costs of higher quality school-age care (*Sec 4.2.6*)
* Ensuring that health and safety practices are appropriate to the provider setting and age of children served (*Sec 5.3*) for school-age center based licensed and any license exempt programs. And provide examples of important school-age training such as positive youth development and trauma informed care essential to quality care for children up to age 12 that looks different for older ages of children than for early care. For example, safe sleep practices *(Sec 5.3.2)* may not be relevant and could be reconfigured for school-age only providers; and child development *(Sec 5.3.12)* is extremely essential yet most effective if it is designed to extend up to late childhood/early adolescence and not focus solely on infant through pre-K.
* Offering the perspective of the unique school-age workforce that often works only part of the day (afterschool) or part of the year (summer) for areas such as *Sec 5.3.13* involving hours of training, which may look different than for full time, year round staff.
* Supporting school-age informed inspections and monitoring visits (*Sec 5.4.2*- licensed *and 5.4.3* license-exempt) that are qualified “appropriate to the provider setting and age of children served (*Sec 5.4.4*)”
* Encouraging and supporting development and use of professional development and training “including for those working in school-age care” Sec 6 and describing how training and PD is appropriate to children of different age groups including specialized credentials for school-age children *(Sec 6.2.4).*
* Showing the depth and breadth of content available for training and professional development in the youth development field in regards to *Sec 6.3.1 (a) (k)* “supporting the positive development of school-age children”
* Developing or continuing to build upon out-of-school time learning and developmental guidelines mentioned in *Sec. 6.4.1*
* Working with the state to determine how school-age programs *(Sec 7.3.2 (b)(ix)* including licensed and license –exempt *(7.3.2 (b)(iii*) can best participate in the QRIS
* Supporting the state in offering reciprocity in QRIS for programs that meet all or part of the state’s school age quality standards *(Sec 7.3.3)*
* Helping formulate and describe how the state supports state and local efforts to adopt high quality program standards including for school age children *(Sec 7.9.1 (c)).*

And throughout the plan:

* Contributing to the conversations around child health and wellness, social and emotional learning, nutrition, development, and physical well being.
* Supporting outreach to vulnerable populations such as English Language Learners and underserved areas; and partnering with parents and the community.
* Engaging in the big picture thinking of how to design a streamlined system for parents of children who need care across the age continuum
* Connecting, coordinating and leveraging across federal and state systems such as 21st CCLC, national service, mentoring etc.

Together we can decide which of these or other areas we might collaborate on to make the 2022 plan at this critical time for parents and families the most effective yet. We look forward to continuing our partnership with your agency and providing what we can to support your work of expanding access and quality of child care programs so working parents can have peace of mind to build their careers and support their families with the best programs available.