

# Talking to Congress about Afterschool

Use this outline as a guide in your meetings with members of Congress and their staff in talking about afterschool. Next to each section, you may want to jot down the name of the person(s) responsible for covering that point in the meeting.

Most importantly, remember to ask the members you visit to support funding for afterschool through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) funding and the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG).

A few last minute tips:

- Be sure to stay on-topic and convey the important benefits of afterschool for kids, families, and communities.
- Meetings are short; plan how your team will cover your points in the allotted time!
- Allow everyone to say a few words, and make sure young people have time to share.
- Offer to follow up with additional information. It's OK if you don't have all the answers to questions raised!
- Have fun!

## Introductions \_\_\_\_\_

The Group Leader should introduce themselves first, followed by everyone else. State your name, title and organization or affiliation.

**For the rest of the meeting, divvy up speaking roles.**

## Thanks for taking the time to meet with us.

- We are part of a delegation of afterschool advocates meeting with members of Congress and their staff to emphasize the power and impact of local afterschool and summer learning programs.
- First, thank you for supporting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative and the Child Care Development Block Grant in the past.

## 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and CCDBG Ask \_\_\_\_\_

We are here to ask you to build on the success of these investments by supporting funding for 21st CCLC and CCDBG in fiscal year 2025 —

- Please increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative by \$750 million for FY2025, to bring the total to almost \$2.1 billion. This amount would give thousands more children access to quality afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs in 50 states. And, it would help address the challenges of rising expenses associated with hiring and training quality staff.
- Today, many of our young people are in crisis and need a wide range of supports for their academics and well-being. We know this is a challenging year and realize you have tough decisions to make. However, funding cuts or even level funding would result in students losing access to the quality afterschool and summer programs that support them.
- Current funding for the initiative supports quality afterschool and summer learning programs for about 1.3 million children. But unmet demand has skyrocketed. For every child in a program, 4 are waiting to get in. At the same time, program costs continue to increase and current funding levels do not ensure that staff are paid a living wage and provided benefits, including paid sick time.

The evidence that these programs work is abundant, with decades of research. And, there is strong public support for funding—83% of American voters oppose cuts to funding for afterschool and summer.

- Decades of research show that afterschool and summer programs work. Students who regularly participate in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers improve their school attendance, class participation and behavior, and reading and math grades. Increasing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding is critical to accelerate learning and support student well-being.
- Support for funding programs is at an all-time high. 8 in 10 voters — across parties, community types, racial and ethnic groups, and ages — agree that elected officials should invest more in them.
- 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs are also able to leverage additional resources, engaging local businesses, nonprofits, partners, volunteers, schools, and others to support the program. Research shows that every \$1 invested saves at least \$3.

**We ask that you help ensure the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has the essential discretionary funding it needs for FY2025, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels.** \_\_\_\_\_

- Nearly half (45%) of children served through Child Care Development Fund are school-aged (5-12 years old), and include participants in afterschool and summer learning programs. Any changes to federal childcare law should continue to support school-aged students and continue to allow CCDBG funds to support quality afterschool and summer learning programs.

**Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and afterschool and summer learning programs is critical.** \_\_\_\_\_

- Every day, 7.7 million children are alone after school and are unsupervised. Parents of nearly 25 million youth say their children would participate in a program if one were available.

**Make afterschool real and relevant: (various speakers on your team)**

- Talk about how many children are currently served through 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC in your state/community versus how many are on waitlists or could be served with more funding (see your state fact sheet and listing of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants and draw attention to those same materials in the leave behind packet).
- Talk about your program(s) and the impact of afterschool and summer programs on students, families, and the community. Tell a story about how your program makes an impact in your community with a focus on alignment of programs with the school day or sparking a passion for young people that engages them in school. Discuss the need to sustain programs funded by federal COVID relief (known as ESSER, or Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) to continue to help students accelerate learning and support their well-being.
- Data! If you have any of your own evaluation data at the state or local level, be sure to share it.
- Talk about the unmet needs in your community. Students and families still need support and sustaining programs is vital for students' academic growth and well-being. During the pandemic, local programs overcame myriad challenges and adapted to meet the needs of students and families. Needs are different now, but have only grown. Talk about the needs in your community and how programs help, such as:
  - Programs are making an impact in communities by supporting learning, promoting mental well-being, and helping young people stay engaged as they develop the skills they need to succeed.
  - Federal COVID relief has helped some programs and been challenging to access for other programs. Students will continue to need academic and wrap-around support long after the September 2024 deadline for spending ARP (American Rescue Plan) ESSER funds.

**Other Asks – As relevant to your state/network \_\_\_\_\_**

**Support the needs of older youth in reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).** As WIOA works to provide meaningful, in-demand job opportunities, Congress should focus on accessible youth pathways to jobs—including the infrastructure, technology, energy, medical, and education jobs—that the country needs to fill on a local and national scale. Community partners in youth development, such as afterschool and summer programs, have shown themselves to be key partners in career pathway efforts and should be included in WIOA reauthorization through the Youth Workforce Readiness Act (S. 454.) ***If relevant, you can emphasize the connection between the foundational skills that students get in out-of-school-time programs and the skills employers are looking for after high school.***

**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% cut from the FY 2023 level. The STEM Education Directorate bore \$199 million of that cut—a 15% 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.

**Lastly, Invite them to join the Afterschool Caucus, and visit a program for *Lights On Afterschool* this October!**

*Check Caucus list first. If the member is already on the Caucus, skip this section and thank them for being on the Caucus.*

- To show your support for afterschool programs, we ask that you (or your boss, if you are meeting with a staff member) join the (House/Senate) Afterschool Caucus and support efforts to expand afterschool and summer opportunities for young people.
- We hope you can join us in visiting a local afterschool showcase during *Lights On Afterschool* this October! Who should we contact about scheduling a site visit?

**Closing: Reinforce the primary asks and thank them!**

- Thank you again for your time. We hope you will support afterschool by increasing funding for 21st CCLC by \$750 million for FY2025, bringing the total to just over \$2 billion, to serve more children and help programs keep up with growing costs. This will build on the recent investments made by Congress and ensure that our kids have safe and enriching environments to go after school.
- We are here as a resource any time you are looking for information or a program to visit.
- Everyone should send a thank you note after the meeting — you can do this on the conference app!

**Please send a thank you note through the app.**