

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(s) 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 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) funding and the Child Care and 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 Centers initiative and the Child Care and Development Block Grant in the FY2026 Labor, HHS, Education spending bill that passed in early February.

21st 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 2027 —

- Please increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative by \$750 million for FY2027, 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 all 50 states. And it would help address the challenges of rising expenses associated with hiring and training quality staff.
- We know these are fiscally challenging time; however, many of our young people are in crisis and need a wide range of supports for their academics and well-being. Funding cuts or even level funding would result in students losing access to the quality afterschool and summer programs that support them. Elimination of 21st CCLC as dedicated afterschool and summer funding, including moving to a block grant, would mean 1.4 million students would lose programs in 10,000 communities, and 150,000 staff would lose jobs.
- Current funding for the initiative supports quality afterschool and summer learning programs for about 1.4 million children. However, 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. Decades of research show that afterschool and summer programs work. Students

who regularly participate in 21st Century Community Learning Centers improve their school attendance, class participation and behavior, and reading and math grades. Increasing 21st CCLC funding is critical to accelerate learning and support student well-being. With NAEP scores declining, the additional customized support that afterschool and summer programs provide is critical.

- Support for funding programs is at an all-time high. 9 in 10 voters—across parties, community types, racial and ethnic groups, and ages—agree that elected officials should invest more in them, based on a December 2024 poll.
- 21st 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 in afterschool 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 FY2027, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels. _____

- Nearly half (44%) of children served through the Child Care and Development Fund are school-age (5-12 years old), and include participants in afterschool and summer learning programs. Any federal child care law should continue to support school-age students and continue to allow CCDBG funds to support quality afterschool and summer learning programs.
- Working parents need care for their kids, whose school schedules typically start later and end earlier than work hours, and include long summer breaks. CCDBG subsidies allow parents access to safe, high-quality settings and provide real choices for kids' development, socialization, and overall well-being.

Funding for 21st CCLC and afterschool and summer learning programs is critical. _____

- 21st CCLC makes a huge impact for the 1.4 million children it reaches, but 3 in 4 kids whose parents want afterschool for them are missing out.
- Young people spend 80% of their waking hours outside school, which means that schools alone are not enough. Parents, whether they are staying at home or in the workforce, need safe, engaging spaces for their children during out-of-school hours.

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

- Talk about how many children are currently served through 21st 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 21st CCLC grants, and draw attention to those same materials in the leave-behind packet).
- Data! If you have any of your own evaluation data at the state or local level, be sure to share it.

Other Asks – As relevant to your state/network _____

- 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?
- See Optional Asks for talking points on AmeriCorps, the Afterschool ACCESS Act and AFTERSCHOOL Act, STEM, and more.

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 FY2027, bringing the total to almost \$2.1 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.