

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 9, 2003

President George Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

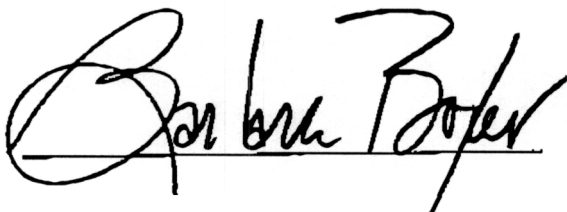
We are writing to urge you to support enough funding in your fiscal year 2005 budget proposal for the 21st Community Learning Centers so the program can continue to grow and more children will have the option of high-quality, safe, afterschool learning activities. These programs are critical to children's success in school and in life, as well as their parents' ability to work. If funding is provided for these programs at the level promised in No Child Left Behind, a total of 2.8 million children would be served through these Centers.

In October, the Afterschool Alliance released findings from its sixth Annual Voters Poll, which indicates that voters strongly support public investments in afterschool programs and candidates who are committed to these initiatives. Furthermore, voters favor afterschool programs that are more than just an extension of the school day — programs that offer hands-on learning opportunities, recreation, community service, and creative activities that inspire kids to learn and grow.

In fiscal year 2003, afterschool programs served 1.4 million children. We believe that we can do even better for children and working parents. Today, more than 28 million children have parents who work outside of the home. As a result, nearly 15 million children have no place to go once the school day ends. Communities in our states are increasingly searching for additional afterschool programming to meet these needs. They rely on these programs to keep kids safe, help working families, and provide children with a much needed opportunity to learn and grow.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We hope you will join us in ensuring that every child has a genuine opportunity to succeed and that no child is left behind. The availability of quality afterschool programs moves us toward that goal.

Sincerely,



Jan Paulsen

Mary L. Fortson

Maria Casanova

Robert A. Taft Jr.

Blanche L. Lincoln

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Patsy Murray

Jeanne Feinstein

Rebbie Stearns

Alyssa Snow

Elizabeth Dole

Tony Bailey Hutchinson