



For Immediate Release
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President Biden's FY 2025 Budget Proposal Is Inadequate to Meet the Country's Vast Unmet Need for Afterschool Programs

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“With costs rising and pandemic relief winding down, the FY 2025 budget proposal the Biden administration released yesterday is a missed opportunity to address our country’s enormous unmet need for afterschool and summer learning programs. Flat funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool, would leave millions of students without the programs they need to succeed in school and in life. The afterschool community applauds the proposed \$8 billion in mandatory funding for the new Academic Acceleration and Achievement Grants for high-need school districts, which would be used, in part, to expand learning time including both in the summer and in extended day or afterschool programs. But the surest – and only reliable – way to address the huge national deficit in afterschool and summer learning funding would be to boost funding for 21st CCLC and utilize the quality supports and infrastructure that has been built through 21st CCLC over the past 25 years.

Afterschool programs offer homework help, hands-on learning opportunities, engagement in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and physical fitness, opportunities to interact with peers and caring adults, access to mentors, support for youth mental health, college and careers, and much more. They help students succeed by improving grades, school attendance, social skills, behavior and more. But the unmet demand for afterschool programs is huge, and programs are struggling.

In the United States today, for every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. Some 24.7 million U.S. children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a survey of 1,500 parents commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in 2022. That is the highest number ever recorded. Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children (at 60% and 54% respectively) than among children overall (49%). Cost is the top barrier to enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent of parents rate the quality of the afterschool program their child attends as excellent (51%) or very good (39%).

A survey of 1,116 afterschool program providers representing 8,800 centers conducted in late 2023 found that the majority of afterschool programs have waiting lists of students they are unable to serve. Some 81% of providers reported being concerned about their ability to hire and/or retain staff, and nearly half reported that their costs have increased. Both surveys were conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance.

This year, the country is celebrating 25 years since the launch of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). It is unique among U.S. Department of Education programs in that it provides funding by formula to all 50 states and to territories to enable competitive grants to local community-based organizations, local government, schools, libraries, museums, faith-based organizations, and other entities that can provide quality afterschool and summer programs that responsive to the needs of their communities. The program has many champions in Congress, from both sides of the political aisle, because members see firsthand, in their states and communities, the many ways quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised and learning after the school day ends. Conversely, they see the great struggles children and parents face, and the harm to businesses and our economy, when there are not enough afterschool programs to meet the demand. For those reasons, the afterschool community will work tirelessly to convince Congress to substantially increase our nation's investment in afterschool and summer learning programs in FY 2025, beyond what the Biden administration proposed yesterday."

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.