



**NEWS RELEASE**  
April 24, 2007

**CONTACT:** Gretchen Wright  
202/371-1999

## **Massachusetts State Representative Honored as an Afterschool Champion in Nation's Capital**

*Parents, Educators, Students, Afterschool Leaders  
Urge Congress to Fully Fund Afterschool Programs*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Afterschool Alliance today honored Massachusetts State Representative Robert DeLeo, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee in the Massachusetts General Court, for his support for afterschool programs at a gala event in Washington, D.C. At the *Breakfast of Champions*, the Afterschool Alliance honored Atlanta Falcons star quarterback Michael Vick for his work on behalf of disadvantaged children, as well as eight individuals and the New Hampshire Department of Education for ongoing work on behalf of afterschool programs. Members of Congress scheduled to speak include Senators Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), John Kerry (D-MA) and John E. Sununu (R-NH), as well as Representatives Dale Kildee (D-MI) and Nita Lowey (D-NY).

According to the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership, Chair DeLeo has championed several efforts to support and expand afterschool in Massachusetts, including the first-ever Afterschool and Out of School Time Commission in the state. He also supported new state funding for a range of afterschool educational and enrichment supports for children and youth, such as the After School Quality Grant program at the Massachusetts Department of Education.

The *Breakfast of Champions* is part of the sixth annual “Afterschool for All Challenge” which brings together hundreds of parents, educators, children, program directors and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. Following the *Breakfast*, the advocates fanned out across Capitol Hill for meetings with their Senators and Representatives, and congressional staff.

“We know that afterschool programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire student learning,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But every day, 14.3 million children take care of themselves after school. If programs were available, an additional 15 million kids would participate, but at the rate we’re going, they’re never going to get that chance. Federal funding shortfalls have undercut the promise of afterschool. We’re in our nation’s capital to remind lawmakers that all kids need the opportunities and experiences that afterschool programs provide and that they and their families are relying on Congress to help support these programs.”

The bipartisan *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative in FY 2007, but funding has fallen far short of authorized levels. It was funded at just \$981 million this year – more than \$20 million in real cuts to the funding provided in 2002.

Other state champions honored were: Sandra McBrayer of The Children’s Initiative in California; Connecticut’s Tom Buckley of AT&T; Camille McCashland of the Office of the Governor in Idaho; Kansas State Senator Laura Kelly; Maine State Representative Chris Barstow; Commissioner Lyonel B. Tracy on behalf of the New Hampshire Department of Education; James Shaw of the Mayor’s Coalition to Prevent Juvenile Crime in Florence, South Carolina; and Afterschool advocate Joan Yoshitomi of Washington State.

# # # #

*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 by 2010. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*