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Afterschool Leader Lauds Congress for Funding Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs in FY26, But Warns Millions of Children Are Being Left Behind

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“The FY26 budget both chambers of Congress have now passed has good news for the nation’s children and families: It continues dedicated funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) at \$1.329 billion. That is the same amount Congress appropriated for the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs in FY25. While it falls far short of meeting the need, we are grateful Congress rejected the Trump administration’s proposal to end dedicated funding for this vitally important initiative, which supports programs that keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised, and learning after the school day ends. We thank the bipartisan champions in Congress who fought so hard to secure afterschool funding this year, and are also pleased with the small increase to the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and level funding for AmeriCorps, both of which support afterschool and summer learning programs.

Still, there has been no increase in 21st CCLC funding since FY22, even as costs associated with running programs have soared. According to [a 2025 household survey](#) conducted by Edge Research, the parents of 29.6 million U.S. children want afterschool programs for their kids – but fewer than 7 million students are currently enrolled. Most of the nearly 23 million children left behind are in middle- and low-income families. When programs are not available, more children and youth are unsupervised and at risk and there are more academic failures, more hungry kids, more chronic absenteeism, higher dropout rates, more parents forced out of their jobs as our child care crisis worsens, and a less STEM-ready and successful workforce in our future.

The same survey found that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs, and the afterschool community will fight for that, from the federal government, states and localities, businesses, and philanthropy. Our country will be stronger when we fund the programs that prepare all our children and youth to succeed in school and in life.”

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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.