



For Immediate Release
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Afterschool Leader Urges Lawmakers to Reconsider Diverting Afterschool Funds

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“Yesterday the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee made a grave and potentially costly error by voting to allow 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) afterschool program funds to be diverted to largely untested programs to extend the school day. At a time when 15 million children and youth in this country have no safe, supervised activities after the school days ends, we need to protect funding for afterschool and summer learning programs – not divert it.

Quality afterschool programs keep children safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families. They are proven, popular and in high demand. In community after community, educators and parents know students who discovered their passion and love for learning because of the fun, creative, educational activities afterschool programs provide. At a time when many schools are struggling, afterschool programs offer the homework help, mentoring, field trips, hands-on science, art, music, job preparation, and similar activities that help students engage. They involve community assets as they teach children how birds fly, why flowers bloom, and how to build robots, program computers and balance checkbooks – and students respond.

We recognize that yesterday’s Subcommittee action was prompted by the Administration’s interest in extending the school day and the Subcommittee’s desire to support an Administration priority. It is truly unfortunate that the Administration and now the Subcommittee want to fund extended day programs at the expense of proven afterschool programs. Lawmakers who praise afterschool programs should support afterschool programs. What the Subcommittee did yesterday would, in practice, shut program doors at a time when children and families need them more than ever.

The afterschool community supports testing extended day programs, with a new funding stream. We continue to ask officials to do the math, and acknowledge that extending the school day by 30 minutes – or even an hour – will not mean that children are in safe, enriching environments until their parents return home from work at 6 or 7 PM. Even with an extended school day in place, working families will need afterschool programs.

While we would like to applaud the Subcommittee for including a much-needed \$100 million increase for 21st CCLC funding in its bill yesterday, the policy change adopted with it would

mean that these additional dollars – as well as much of the funding that supports afterschool programs now – would likely be diverted. That would harm working families and leave more children unsupervised in the hours after school. Such a controversial rewrite of education laws should be discussed as part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* reauthorization, not pushed through in a spending bill. This is no way to educate or protect our children, or support working families.”

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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.