



STATEMENT OF JODI GRANT
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Congress Stands Up for Kids

Nation's Top Afterschool Advocate Praises Increase in Afterschool Budget

“We’re are delighted that after six years of flat-funding and across the board cuts, Congress has sent to the President an omnibus spending measure that would increase funding for the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, help working families and inspire students to learn. This measure will allow the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative to serve an additional 100,000 children in FY 08.

By sending this spending package to the President’s desk, Congress is responding to the will of the American people, who believe that afterschool programs should be expanded. A 2006 election survey found that 72 percent of voters agree that ‘our newly elected public officials in Congress should increase funding for afterschool programs,’ and just 24 percent disagree. But strong public support has not brought adequate funding from lawmakers – and programs are struggling. A 2006 web survey found that many programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet demand, and budget cuts and stagnation are taking a toll. Many programs have made deep cuts, and leaders say future funding is insecure.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion for the 21st CCLC in FY 07, but years of freezes and across the board cuts have left the initiative badly underfunded. The \$981 million the President originally proposed for FY 08 is more than \$20 million in real cuts to the funding provided in 2002.

By increasing the 21st CCLC to \$1.1 billion, Congress is taking an important first step in putting the nation back on the road to afterschool for all children. More than 14 million kindergarten through 12th graders are unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends. It is long past time for us to increase our investment in quality afterschool programs.”

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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 by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.