



STATEMENT OF JUDY Y. SAMELSON
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***As House Appropriations Committee Recommends Flat Funding,
Expert Warns that Nation Urgently Needs More Afterschool Programs***

“Today’s House Appropriations Committee decision to flat fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative for the fourth consecutive year is truly disappointing. A \$1 billion appropriation for afterschool is not nearly adequate to meet the need, especially when we know that 42,000 kindergarteners are among millions of youth in this country who go home to empty houses after school every day.

The No Child Left Behind Act recommends that \$2 billion in federal funding be provided for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative in Fiscal Year 2005 to keep kids safe, help them improve academically and support working families. If Congress appropriates just half that amount – \$1 billion – millions of children and their parents will have to find another way to juggle work, school, learning and safety.

In May, the Afterschool Alliance released *America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America*, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America’s children spend their afternoons. It found that just 6.5 million children are in afterschool programs, while the parents of another 15.3 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available. Need is especially high for middle school children. Just six percent of middle schoolers are in afterschool programs, while another 34 percent are unsupervised in the afternoons. *America After 3 PM* was funded by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

We ask Congress to pay attention to this data and to what parents in their own communities are telling them. American children deserve safe, supervised environments in which they can grow and discover a passion for learning. Parents deserve relief from worry about their children each afternoon. It’s time to uncap the federal afterschool program.”

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