



NEWS RELEASE
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Alliance Middle School Afterschool Director Testifies before Congress

Horning Joins Afterschool Alliance in Call for Full Federal Funding for Afterschool

Washington, DC -- Matthew Horning, Director of the Alliance Middle School Navigators Afterschool Program, has returned to Alliance after delivering testimony on Thursday, March 30 to a congressional committee considering funding proposals for afterschool programs.

In his testimony before the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, Horning described to committee members, including Chairman Ralph Regula (R-OH), the vital role afterschool programs play in the lives of children and families in the community. He warned that the federal government's failure to fully fund its own 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, the principal funding stream for afterschool, is harmful in Ohio and across the nation.

Federal funding for the 21st CCLC initiative has been frozen since 2002, despite funding increases authorized in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. "[B]ecause of the freeze on 21st CCLC funds," Horning said, "Ohio has been cutting back on the number of new grants awarded each year. Last year Ohio only funded two percent of new 21st CCLC proposals. In our community, that funding is essential because Alliance City doesn't have a booming economy that would enable local businesses to give us the financial support we would need."

Horning told the story of one afterschool student, whom he identified only by his first name to protect the child's privacy, who came to the program with a history of school violence. Horning said:

After only a few weeks, David's mom called me to say "thank you" because he was showing so much improvement. For the first time all year he had told her about an upcoming test, studied for the test, and then came home and told her how he did! He also has been taking homework home every night when he used to bring it home maybe twice a month. David's mom said that just knowing he had extra time afterschool to get his work done and get his questions answered took such a weight off David's shoulders that he is now excited about coming to school.

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Even his behavior has improved because he no longer feels the need to disrupt class to cover up for not having his work done or not knowing the answers. Every 21st CCLC program has many Davids who have grown to rely on the services they provide and the relationships they have built with caring afterschool staff.

“I felt the Members of Congress were very receptive to what we had to say about the importance of afterschool programs,” Horning said after the hearing. In fact, after Horning concluded his testimony by saying that afterschool programs were an answer to a prayer for some children, Rep. David Obey (D-WI) underscored the point, saying, “Double amen on your message.”

Joining Horning at the hearing was Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. She echoed his call for full funding. “The afterschool programs supported by the [21st Century] initiative,” she said in testimony, “provide kids with academic support that inspires them to learn. It helps keep them safe and healthy during the afternoon hours when juvenile crime rates soar, and constructively engaged when they might otherwise be getting into trouble on the streets, or perhaps taking drugs, joining gangs or engaging in other inappropriate behaviors.... The funding freeze is a huge problem for afterschool programs around the nation.”

Horning and Grant met privately with Congressman Regula after the hearing. For copies of their testimonies, or to arrange interviews, contact the Afterschool Alliance at 202-371-1999.

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities working to ensure that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by the year 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.