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October 28, 2020

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**Afterschool Leader Lauds Senate Introduction of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020, Says Passage Would Aid Students, Families Struggling in Pandemic**

*Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance*

“Introduction of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020 in the U.S. Senate this week offers hope to students and families at a time when many continue to struggle with school closures and erratic schedules caused by the pandemic. The adjustment to virtual schooling has been difficult for many children and youth, their working parents and employers. Afterschool programs can help but in too many cases, they have been constrained by lack of flexibility and funding. This bill would change that.

The afterschool community commends Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Tina Smith (D-Minn.) for introducing this legislation. We urge Senate leaders to make its passage a priority. It would:

- Allow 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC local grantees to provide virtual or in-person services to students during the school day if the students are not getting full-time, in-person instruction in school,
- Require local grantees to follow health mandates,
- Authorize and appropriate \$1.2 billion to help the local grantees provide additional hours of service, hire more staff to maintain social distancing, and pay for cleaning, sanitization, and PPE supplies, and
- Make the funding and flexibility available through at least June 2022.

This bill would allow out-of-school-time programs to do much more to support families by stepping in to keep kids safe and assist them with learning during the hours, days and weeks when schools are physically closed.

The [House passed a version](#) of this bill last month – a version that provides flexibility but without much-needed additional funding. With COVID-19 affecting just about everyone, demand has grown for afterschool and summer learning programs and the costs to run them safely have risen sharply. Our country’s students, families, schools and our economy will be better off if the Senate version of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020 (S. 4868) becomes law very soon.”

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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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*