



NEWS RELEASE
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CONTACT: Lisa Lederer
202/371-1999

**Afterschool Programs “Vital to Children and Families,”
Women Senators Tell President**

***All 16 Women Senators Issue Joint Call
For Greater Federal Support for Afterschool Programs***

Washington, DC -- A bipartisan group of all 16 women Senators sent a letter to President Bush last week urging him to increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in his Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposal, which is due early next week. The 21st CCLC initiative is the chief federal funding stream supporting afterschool programs.

The women Senators’ letter says, in part, “Today the federal afterschool program, which provides grants to programs serving approximately 1.3 million children, is vital to children and families across America... The demand for affordable, quality afterschool programs far exceeds the availability of these programs. We all hear from our constituents, as well as local officials, that more afterschool programs are needed... In Fiscal Year 2008, the 21st CCLC received its first increase in six years. If we do not continue this trend, it will become more difficult for the 21st CCLC program to meet the needs of the children currently served, and it will prevent the program from reaching the children who need a safe place to go after the school day ends.”

“It is important to provide children with an after school program that offers parents an option in providing a safe and enriching environment after the school bell rings,” said Senator Susan Collins (R-ME).

Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Collins were the lead sponsors of the letter, and Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA), Blanche L. Lincoln (D-AR), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) signed on.

“Communities across the country look to afterschool programs to help keep kids off the streets and engaged in enriching activities until parents get home from work,” said

Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “The women Senators know that quality afterschool programs benefit communities and that, even in these tough economic times, giving our children alternatives to crime, gangs, substance abuse and sexual activity is a good investment. In addition, these programs give our children the skills they need to keep America strong and competitive. With more than 14 million kindergarten through 12th graders unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends, President Bush should listen to the women Senators and increase funding for the afterschool programs next year.”

The 21st CCLC initiative received a modest funding increase in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget, after six years of flat funding and small cuts. While the increase will give an additional 100,000 children access to safe and enriching afterschool programs, it remains far short of the \$2.5 billion authorized by *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The 21st CCLC initiative today serves some 1.3 million children. According to the Afterschool Alliance’s *America After 3 PM* report, the most in-depth study ever to explore how America’s children spend their afternoons, 14.3 million kindergarten through 12th graders care for themselves after the school day ends. The parents of more than 15 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.

A 2006 election eve/election night Afterschool Alliance public opinion survey found that two in three voters said afterschool programs are an absolute necessity in their communities, and 82 percent agreed there should be some type of organized activity or safe space for children to go every day after school.

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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.