



NEWS RELEASE
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Increase Funds for Afterschool Programs, All 14 Women Senators Tell President Bush

Democratic, Republican Women Senators Join Together To Call for Greater Federal Support for Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC -- A bipartisan group of all 14 women Senators today released the text of a letter to President Bush urging him to increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in his Fiscal Year 2008 budget proposal, due to be presented to Congress next February. The 21st CCLC initiative is the chief federal funding stream supporting afterschool programs. It has been flat-funded for six years, and subjected to several across-the-board cuts. To date, none of the increases authorized by the *No Child Left Behind Act* have been realized.

The women Senators' letter says, in part, "The 21st CCLC program has been level funded for six consecutive years. If this trend continues, 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 growing to reach more children. For these reasons, we urge you to propose an increase in funding for this vital program so that more children can receive the proven benefits of quality afterschool programs." An Afterschool Alliance study released in late 2005 found that 26 states could not make any new grants to afterschool programs that year because of inadequate federal funding, and experts say most states struggled to fund afterschool programs again in 2006.

Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) 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), Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA), Blanche L. Lincoln (D-AR), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) signed on.

"America's families rely on afterschool programs to keep children safe and provide them with opportunities to learn and grow," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Like most Americans, the women Senators want every child to have the chance to attend an afterschool program rather than being unsupervised and at risk for becoming involved in crime, gangs, substance abuse, and sexual activity each afternoon. Afterschool programs are a sound investment, even at times when budgets are tight. We urge President Bush to listen to the

women Senators, and to the nation, and increase funding for the afterschool programs our children urgently need.”

In an election eve and election night poll conducted for the Afterschool Alliance by Lake, Snell, Perry & Associates, Inc., 72 percent of voters agreed that “our newly elected public officials in Congress should increase funding for afterschool programs.”

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.

“Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families,” Grant added. “Every dollar invested in afterschool programs saves money over time.”

[Read full letter here.](#)

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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 dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. More information and the letter itself are available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.