



**NEWS RELEASE**  
October 22, 2020

**CONTACT:** [Magen Eissenstat](mailto:Magen.Eissenstat@afterschoolalliance.org)  
405/371-5837

## **America is Turning the Lights On for Afterschool Today!**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Sorting donated food and disinfecting donated toys. Writing letters to isolated nursing home residents. Virtual STEM fairs and art contests. Bullying prevention activities. Exercises that demonstrate how ranked and winner-take-all voting work. Fall festivals with pumpkin painting and pumpkin bowling. A car caravan to a State Capitol. Those are among the many activities that students, parents, educators, lawmakers, business and faith leaders, community members and others are joining today for the 21<sup>st</sup> annual [Lights On Afterschool](#). Several U.S. Senators including Kyrsten Sinema (Ariz.), Ron Wyden (Ore.) and Jon Tester (Mont.), as well as Congressman David Cicilline (RI) and scores of lieutenant governors, mayors, state legislators, and other leaders are joining the thousands of events taking place across the nation. Many are virtual this year.

The [Afterschool Alliance](#) organizes *Lights On Afterschool* to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs, which in normal times provide help with homework; mentors; art, dance and music; healthy snacks and meals; computer programming; opportunities to think critically, collaborate and communicate with peers and adults; job and college readiness; sports and fitness activities; robotics; and opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning. During the pandemic, programs have stepped up to provide virtual educational activities, deliver meals and enrichment kits, help families bridge the digital divide, check in with children to ensure their social and emotional needs are being met, connect families to social services, care for the children of essential workers and first responders, and much more.

Nickelodeon and the National Urban League have teamed up with the Afterschool Alliance for a national *Lights On Afterschool Youth Town Hall* this evening. Youth leaders will share their afterschool experiences and discuss what youth need to thrive and what leaders can do to help all youth reach their potential. National Urban League President and CEO Marc Morial, U.S. Congressman David Cicilline (RI), and Nickelodeon's Darci Lynne, *America's Got Talent* winner, will be special guests. Tomorrow, Friday, October 23, the [Million Girls Moonshot](#) and NASA will provide afterschool youth with an out-of-this world *Lights On* experience when students [speak live to astronaut](#) Jasmin Moghbeli about her journey to becoming an astronaut and the Artemis mission to land on the moon.

“The strength and resilience afterschool programs are demonstrating this year is remarkable. Despite scarce resources, programs are finding ways to help students through what is, for many families, the hardest of times,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “So we are especially pleased that thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events are taking place around the country this week and thrilled that so many programs have found ways to safely showcase the skills students hone and talents they develop at their afterschool programs. These programs help students succeed in school and in life by keeping them safe, inspiring them to learn, and

supporting working parents. But there aren't nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need, especially now, with so many schools functioning virtually and with school schedules changing without warning. We need to invest much more in afterschool and summer learning programs.”

A large majority of afterschool programs that are open this fall report facing significant barriers as they strain to meet the needs of the students and families they have long supported, according to [national surveys of parents and afterschool providers](#) conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance and released in September. They find that programs and parents are challenged by virtual learning and evolving school schedules; programs are limited by budgets inadequate to address new safety protocols and students' emerging needs; and students from low-income families are now much less likely than others to have access to out-of-school-time programs.

Tuesday night, the Empire State Building was lit in yellow and blue for *Lights On Afterschool*. Other landmarks being lit for afterschool this week include Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, the Indianapolis Power & Light Building, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in Louisiana, the Branson Ferris Wheel in Missouri, the State Capitol in Pennsylvania, the Governor M. Cuomo Bridge in New York, and the Pawtucket Bridge in Rhode Island.

On October 2, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed bipartisan resolution S. Res. 731, which calls for recognition of *Lights On Afterschool*. The lead sponsors of the resolution, Sens. Susan Collins (Maine) and Tina Smith (Minn.), recognized the outstanding contributions afterschool programs have made this summer and school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 *Lights On Afterschool* resolution was co-sponsored by Sens. Mike Braun (Ind.), Pat Roberts (Kansas), Tim Kaine (Va.), Elizabeth Warner (Mass.), and Bob Casey (Pa.).

For the first time, *Lights On Afterschool* is taking place [in South Africa](#) this year with a nationwide campaign to celebrate afterschool programs.

Governments, parents, philanthropies, businesses, and others support afterschool and summer learning programs, but investments are under threat. Again this year, the Trump administration recommended eliminating dedicated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs in its budget proposal, although bipartisan majorities in Congress have made clear they will not do so. The Afterschool Alliance is asking Congress to provide a onetime \$6.2 billion boost in funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers – the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs – to ensure out-of-school-time programs can do more to help students and families during this difficult time.

A large and powerful body of evidence demonstrates improvements in grades, school attendance, behavior and more among children who participate in afterschool programs. Researchers have also found that students in afterschool programs are more engaged in school and excited about learning and develop critical work and life skills such as problem solving, teamwork, and communications.

A list of local *Lights On Afterschool* events is [here](#). To find other events in your area, see [this map](#).

*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).*