

June 15, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Enzi
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

As Congress prepares to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), we urge you to invest in high-quality afterschool, summer, and expanded day learning opportunities that have proven track records of success and meet the needs of children and working families across our nation.

The undersigned organizations are primarily direct service organizations that partner deeply with a total of 612 communities and 7,300 schools across 45 states plus the District of Columbia to deliver high-quality learning to more than 885,000 students in the afternoon, summer, weekends, and evenings. We are also joined by education reform partners who see the power of high-quality extended day learning as a lever for school improvement and, ultimately, economic opportunity. We recognize – as do the teachers and parents we work with – that many children need more high-quality learning time and more enrichment opportunities to prepare for success in college and 21st century careers. Our partnerships include a range of program models and all are supported by rigorous evaluation and have been embraced by partnering school districts and communities, including local civic and corporate leaders.

Each of our organizations is committed to deep alignment with partnering schools and parents so that the academic and enrichment activities we jointly provide will support student learning and success in a coordinated fashion. We are committed to evaluation and continuous improvement and high standards for student learning. These goals are achieved in part through robust selection and training programs for our staff and volunteers, who include many national service participants beginning their careers in education or serving their communities through later-in-life “encore careers.” Our program models vary in levels of penetration within a particular school with the percentage of students served in extended day programs ranging from 10% to 100%. Most of our programs are based in low-performing rural or urban schools, while some are based in community settings and serve students from multiple schools in a low-income community.

Our organizations support the goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program and its effort to extend high-quality academic support and enrichment for children and meet the needs of working families. In some states and districts 21st CCLC has been an important supporter of the work of our organizations. However, in other instances it has been difficult for nonprofit organizations and our partner schools to access 21st CCLC support as currently authorized and implemented.

In response to the Administration’s proposal for 21st CCLC in ESEA reauthorization, we suggest the following principles, which we believe will strengthen the program and improve the quality of both afterschool and extended learning opportunities for children across the country:

- **Distribute 21st CCLC funds through fair and robust competitions**, ensuring that preference is given to applicants that demonstrate moderate to strong evidence of improving student learning as measured by school engagement, grades, proficiency, promotion rates, or other measures of student learning appropriate to the program’s goals and design. Funds could be distributed primarily by formula through states, as they are now, with states then sponsoring sub-grant competitions. We also support creation of a national “Breakthrough Fund” for afterschool and expanded learning time (ELT) quality, and allocation of 25 percent or more of total 21st CCLC funds to be distributed through a national competition that emphasizes innovation, quality, and development of best practices that can be shared across the field.

- **Ensure that nonprofit organizations, in partnership with one or more school districts or a consortium of schools, are eligible applicants** in state sub-grant competitions and any new federal competition. Nonprofit organizations have the capacity to leverage private funding and community support to complement 21st CCLC funding and improve program outcomes. As such, states should remove barriers to nonprofit organizations applying for 21st CCLC sub-grants with one or more districts or a consortium of schools.
- **Offer local communities and school districts flexibility, based on local needs and context, to adopt a variety of extended learning approaches.** These approaches could include afterschool and summer learning programs, models that emphasize community engagement, and expanded learning time models that serve all or most students in a school and are aligned with school-wide improvement and turnaround efforts.
- **Increase the overall investment in 21st CCLC by at least \$500 million above currently appropriated levels,** to encourage and expand high-quality afterschool and summer programs and spur innovative approaches including afterschool, ELT and community school programs.

In advocating for inclusion of well-designed ELT and community schools programs in the 21st Century program, we want to be clear that Congress should **not** shift afterschool funds into programs that add more time to the school day but do not truly engage and support children and do not engage community partners. Instead, we believe Congress should allow states and school districts the flexibility to implement a range of high-quality afterschool, summer, ELT, and community schools approaches so long as they meaningfully engage community partners and provide an appropriate balance of enrichment, academics, and support services.

The communities and schools we work with want to narrow the achievement gap by expanding learning time and engaging a “second shift” of educators. Our organizations and partners are committed to delivering engaging and effective programs that build upon school day learning but also provide arts, music, sports, apprenticeships, and other hands-on learning opportunities. We appreciate your leadership on these important issues and look forward to working with you to expand quality extended learning opportunities through 21st CCLC as ESEA reauthorization moves forward.

Sincerely,

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| ACCESS , Bob Giannino-Racine | Admission Possible , Jim McCorkell | Aim High , Alec Lee |
| AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation , Jack McCarthy | Bay Area Community Resources , Martin Weinstein | Be The Change , Alan Khazei |
| BELL , Tiffany Cooper | Blue Ridge Foundation New York , Matthew Klein | Boston Learning Center , Ayele Shakur |
| Breakthrough Collaborative , Beth Porter | BUILD , Suzanne McKechnie Klahr | The Children’s Aid Society , Richard Buery |
| Citizen Schools , Eric Schwarz | Civic Ventures , Mark Freedman | College Bound Dorchester , Mark Culliton |
| College Forward , Lisa Fielder | College Track , Debbra Lindo | Commongood Careers , James Weinberg |

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Computers for Youth , Elisabeth Stock | Democrats for Education Reform , Joe Williams | Education Equality Project , Ellen Winn |
| Education Pioneers , Scott Morgan | EducationWorks , Marty Friedman | EnCorps Teacher Program , Jennifer Anastasoff |
| Everybody Wins! USA , Rich Greif | Experience Corps , Lester Strong | For Love of Children , Tim Payne |
| Genesys Works , Rafael Alvarez | Global Citizen Year , Abigail Falik | Good Shepherd Services , Sr. Paulette LoMonaco |
| Groundwork , Erica Ahdoot | Harlem RBI , Richard A. Berlin | Higher Achievement , Richard Tagle |
| Horizons National , Lorna Smith | "I Have a Dream" Foundation , Iris Chen | iMentor , Mike O'Brien |
| Jobs for Youth , Andrew Abrahams | Juma Ventures , Marc Spencer | Jumpstart , James Cleveland |
| Lex Mundi Foundation , David Roll | MY TURN , Stephen Pratt | National Summer Learning Association , Ron Fairchild |
| New Jersey After 3, Inc. , Mark Valli | New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition , Diane Genco | New Leaders for New Schools , Jon Schnur |
| New Profit Inc. , Vanessa Kirsch | New Schools Venture Fund , Ted Mitchell | Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship , Amy Rosen |
| North Central Charter Essential School , Stephanie Davolos | Open Doors Academy , Annemarie M. Grassi | Operation Warm , Kim Fremont Fortunato |
| Playworks , Jill Vialet | Points of Light Institute , Michelle Nunn | Public Allies , Paul Schmitz |
| Redwood City 2020 , Sandra Portasio | Rio Grande Educational Collaborative , Michael Silva | Roca , Molly Baldwin |
| Root Cause/Public Innovators , Andrew Wolk | Save The Children USA , Mark Shriver | Say Yes to Education , Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey |
| SeaChange Capital , Chuck Harris | Smiles Change Lives , LeAnn Smith | Spark , Chris Balme |
| Springboard Forward , Mona Cross Sowiski | Student Volunteer Foundation , Joshua Collins | Summer Search , Jay Jacobs |
| What Kids Can Do , Barbara Cervone | Year Up , Gerald Chertavian | |