

THE COLLABORATIVE
for BUILDING
AFTER-SCHOOL
SYSTEMS

August 4, 2011

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-4503

Dear Senator Sanders,

The Collaborative for Building After-School Systems (CBASS)—a coalition of intermediary organizations in eight communities nationwide dedicated to increasing the availability of quality after-school programming by building citywide after-school systems—writes to express our thoughts on the Improving Student Achievement and Engagement through Expanded Learning Time Act of 2011 (S.1311). CBASS believes in strong partnerships between schools and community partners that expand learning time through a full range of educational enrichment opportunities before or after the traditional school day and during summer.

First and foremost, we are pleased that the S. 1311 ensures that nonprofits are eligible to receive grants and be lead applicants under the 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program. We continue to believe school districts and community-based organizations (CBOs) should work in partnership, and that both be eligible entities within the 21st CCLC program. We are pleased that S.1311 maintains the current state to local funding structure. We also support the bill's expansion of the scope of allowable services under the 21st CCLC program to include the broad array of services children might need such as academic enrichment, health, and nutrition.

However, we are concerned that S. 1311 does not provide the flexibility needed to ensure local grantees can design programs that fit their community needs; implies that programs can only be successful if they expand learning time by a minimum of 300 hours per school year; and it does not ensure strong partnerships between schools and community-based partners.

Accordingly, we ask you to strengthen S. 1311 by amending it to include the following policies:

- ***Ensure a comprehensive definition of expanded learning time programs that allow for local flexibility to address community needs.*** We are concerned that S.1311 creates a priority to fund expanded-day, whole school programs over other models of expanded learning time. We believe local communities should have full authority without state or federal preference or direction to make their own decisions about whether to use the 21st CCLC program for before school, after-school, summer learning programs, or whole school or targeted extended day or year.
- ***Ensure expanded learning programs do not just increase time but also increase academic enrichment and engagement.*** We believe it is necessary for S. 1311 to clarify that there is not one model to achieve expanded learning time and that expanded learning time cannot just be more of the same services that are not currently successful. The bill should recognize that

effectively expanding learning time can be achieved in less than 300 hours and should do more than just keep students in their regular classrooms, at the same student/teacher ratio, for longer periods of time. Services should be delivered through a variety of high-quality and effective strategies that integrate academics, enrichment, and skill development through hands-on experiences that make learning more relevant and engaging.

- **Ensure partnerships are central to all the 21st CCLC programs.** We believe that strong partnerships between schools and community partners should be required in any model chosen within the 21st CCLC program. The unique relationship that CBOs have within the community, and the distinct services that they offer, are critical to success in expanding learning time.¹ Community-based partners bring a wealth of distinct approaches that support academic enrichment as well as social and emotional growth, which is essential to academic achievement. Community partners complement the instructional approaches of teachers by customizing experiences that build background knowledge and allow students to activate learning, while also building the foundational skills for success in school, college, and careers.

Also enclosed are our specific recommendations for reauthorizing the 21st CLCC program.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to building comprehensive education systems and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Improving Student Achievement and Engagement through Expanded Learning Time Act of 2011 is fully supportive of summer and afterschool programs that enhance learning, help working families and keep children safe. Please do not hesitate to contact Jessica Donner, Director of the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, at jdonner@tascorp.org, 646-943-8738, or Jennifer Peck, Executive Director of the Partnership for Children and Youth, at Jennifer@partnerforchildren.org, call 510-830-4200 x1601 if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Rebka Atnafou, Executive Director, The After-School Institute (Baltimore)
James Chesire, Interim Executive Director, Chicago Allies for Youth Success
Hathaway Ferebee, Executive Director, Baltimore's Safe and Sound Campaign
Lucy N. Friedman, President, The After-School Corporation (New York City)
Suzette L. Harvey, Executive Director, Prime Time Palm Beach County
Ellen London, Interim CEO and President, DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation
Jennifer Peck, Executive Director, Partnership for Children and Youth (California)
Hillary Salmons, Executive Director, Providence After School Alliance, Inc.
David Sinski, Executive Director, After School Matters (Chicago)
Chris Smith, Executive Director, Boston After School and Beyond

¹ See: Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). *The impact of after-school programs that promote personal and social skills*. Retrieved from <http://www.CASEL.org>