

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 9, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your leadership in passing legislation to provide urgently needed assistance to the American people as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Congress considers additional legislation to respond to this public health crisis, we urge you to include time-limited flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year for the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) program and ensure states and school districts have the resources necessary to provide safe and supportive spaces where students can learn. Doing so will provide urgently needed support for elementary and secondary schools, their students, and families.

As schools nationwide prepare for the new school year, rotating school schedules, online instruction, and periodic closures will be commonplace across the country as the nation continues to combat the spread of the coronavirus. While these plans are intended to promote safety for both children and teachers, they will leave workers with school-aged children in need of supplemental care and educational support this upcoming school year during the hours when schools are providing virtual instruction. According to research, nearly 24 million workers with children between the ages of 6 and 14 will have no at-home child care option.¹ As the nation looks towards the fall, it is imperative that Congress support low-income parents who are not able to work from home and who face greater difficulty paying for care and educational programs for their children. This is essential for our country to begin our economic recovery.

The 21st CCLC program is designed to provide academic, social, and emotional supports to students *outside* the school day. Congress can provide flexibility to 21st CCLC, Title IV, Part

¹ Jonathan I. Dingel, Christina Patterson, and Joseph Vavra, *Child Care Obligations Will Constrain Many Workers When Reopening the US Economy*, Working Paper No. 2020-46, Becker Friedman Institute, April 2020, pp. 1-2. Available at: https://bfi.uchicago.edu/wp-content/uploads/BFI_WP_202046.pdf

Part B of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, as amended by the *Every Student Succeed Act*, by specifically allowing these funds to support students during the traditional school day hours when alternative schedules are in place. This programming would supplement, not supplant the virtual instruction taking place and allow existing and new 21st CCLC subgrantees to provide a comprehensive range of supports and services to students. This flexibility would apply to the 2020-2021 school year.

Under section 4201(b)(1)(A), the term “community learning center” is defined as an entity that “assists students to meet the challenging State academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities (such as programs and activities described in subsection (a)(2)) during *nonschool* hours or *periods when school is not in session* (such as before and after school or during summer recess).” Under ordinary circumstances, this requirement serves to ensure academic enrichment programming is provided for students during nonschool hours. However, given the current circumstances of school operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this statutory provision’s interaction with state laws has led to state education agencies limiting 21st CCLC programming to hours outside of both virtual and in-person school. Without flexibility, 21st CCLC subgrantees cannot adjust to the ongoing changes in school day schedules to meet the needs of students and working parents.

The 21st CCLC program is the only federal funding source dedicated to supporting afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs. Schools have existing, trusted partnerships with community providers through the 21st CCLC program. These relationships can be leveraged now to provide support for working parents and low-income families that need help with their children’s academics and safe care for their school-aged children during the workday.

21st CCLC primarily serves low-income communities by offering high-quality programming for students, as well as enrichment activities like mentoring and tutoring that supplement student learning. These programs are uniquely situated to provide academic support and care for school-aged students now, particularly as students and families are facing changing learning models as local health situations related to the COVID-19 pandemic evolve. 21st CCLC can be leveraged to assist parents who need safe care during school hours so they can stay in the workforce. Increased support and appropriate flexibility for 21st CCLC subgrantees is necessary to provide continued learning for all students, and to enable parents to work and jumpstart our country’s economic recovery.

To support parents returning to work and to ensure children will learn through the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to prioritize investments that allow states and districts to meet the needs of their students and families who need safe and supportive spaces for children during school hours. We urge you to provide time-limited flexibility for the 2020-2021 school year to allow 21st CCLC subgrantees to provide care and academic support for students until full-time person instruction is available for all students.

Without these additional services, schools and parents may be forced to go without needed support. For low-income families, the options for extra support are greatly limited compared to their higher-income peers. Many working families are searching for a safe and enriching option for their children, and the 21st CCLC program is uniquely situated to provide safe care and academic support for students and their families.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Susan Wild
Member of Congress

/s/

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

/s/

Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

/s/

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/

Don Young
Member of Congress

/s/

Billy Long
Member of Congress

/s/

John Katko
Member of Congress

/s/

Tom Reed
Member of Congress

/s/

Susan W. Brooks
Member of Congress

/s/

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

/s/

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/

Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

/s/

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

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Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

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Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

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Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

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Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

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Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress

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Bill Foster
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Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

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Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

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Conor Lamb
Member of Congress

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Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

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Paul D. Tonko
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Jerrold Nadler
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Kathy Castor
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Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress

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Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress

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Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

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Tony Cárdenas
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John Yarmuth
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Joyce Beatty
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Haley M. Stevens
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Andy Levin
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