

February 25, 2008

Dear Congressman,

As co-chairs of the Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out-of-School Time, we are writing to stress the critical need for the federal government's continued investment in after school programming through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. We are alarmed by President Bush's anticipated cuts. This devastating funding reduction would result in Massachusetts' programs serving an estimated 5,500 fewer students. This disinvestment in our children and youth will have dire consequences.

After recently concluding seven months of research, the Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out-of-School Time found that quality programs play a key role in making sure that young people realize their full potential to become well-rounded adults and responsible citizens. After school programs also contribute to positive relationships among youth, which are critical to their mental, emotional and social development.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers play a vital role in providing academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

In the past, Massachusetts received nearly \$21.6 million for FY05 programs and \$16.5 million for FY06 and FY07. Then in FY08, Massachusetts only received \$14.4 million for programs. If President Bush's proposed budget amounts become final, Massachusetts is projected to receive \$17 million for FY09 programs and then only \$12.9 million for 2010. The dramatic fluctuations in year-to-year funding has resulted in reduced 21st

Century Community Learning Centers' programming and services throughout the United States.

We are asking that you do not support the President's proposed budget cuts and please continue to invest in the 21st Century Community Learning Centers that provide high quality after school opportunities to children and youth across the state. It is our hope that with this reinvestment of funding, we will send a message of state-wide support for all high quality after school opportunities that serve our children and youth across the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this important matter. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. McGee
State Senator
Third Essex and Middlesex District

Marie St. Fleur
State Representative
Fifth Suffolk District