

Chairman Kildee Statement at Hearing on “After School Programs: How the Bush Administration's Budget Impacts Children and Families”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education for a subcommittee hearing on “After School Programs: How the Bush Administration’s Budget Impacts Children and Families.”*

I’m pleased to welcome my fellow subcommittee members, the public, and our witnesses, to this hearing on “After School Programs: How the Bush Administration's Budget Impacts Children and Families.”

Last year, Congress increased funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers – the federally supported after school program – by \$100 million.

This year, those centers will provide services to more than 1.5 million children and their families.

And, they’re doing a good job.

As we will hear today from Priscilla Little, of the Harvard Family Research Project, research shows that good after school programs, including 21st Century Community Learning Centers, improve academic, social and emotional, and other outcomes – especially for low-income children.

Chief Carroll, from Representative Sestak’s district, will tell us about the difference good programs are making in the lives of children and their communities by providing safe, nurturing environments after school.

And, I’m especially proud that Ladonna Gamble, who directs the Bridges to the Future Program for the Flint community schools in my hometown, is here to tell us about their outstanding work.

Ms. Gamble, I read in your testimony that one of the ways that you make learning fun for students is to teach them engineering principles by building catapults.

As a former Latin teacher, I tried that myself, but was not as successful as you have been in that endeavor.

It is beyond me, then, why the president would propose not only to slash after school funding by 26 percent or \$281 million, but also to turn the program into a voucher program.

By the administration's own calculations, its proposal could result in more than one million fewer students receiving services.

I had hoped that the president's final education budget would be an improvement over his previous ones, but it is hard to see much positive about increases for Title I and special education that don't even keep up with inflation, or cuts to drug and violence prevention and after school programs, eliminating education technology and career and technical education, and divisive private school and after school voucher proposals.

On that last point, I will quote Ms. Kough, our fourth witness, who I would note was invited by the minority – “the administration's current proposal to convert the 21st century community learning centers program to a voucher system may force programs to close, which would result in more students with no place to go after school. In addition, the move to a voucher system would undermine existing public, private, community, and faith-based partnerships that are working well.”

Fortunately, congressional support for after school programs is bipartisan.

In 2005, I joined with Representatives Lowey, Regula and Ros-Lehtinen to form the After School Caucus to help build support for after school programs.

Today, the Caucus has nearly 80 members, including my friend and Ranking Member, Governor Castle.

And, earlier this month, I joined with Representative Kuhl, a member of this subcommittee, to circulate a bipartisan letter to appropriators requesting a \$250 million increase for after school programs.

So, I do not fear for the future of this fine program, but rather look forward to hearing our witnesses describe how well it has worked and how we can make it work even better.

Thank you.