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United States House of Representatives
Committee on Education and Labor
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education

Hearing on
"After School Programs: How the Bush Administration's Budget Impacts
Children and Families"
March 11, 2008

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Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

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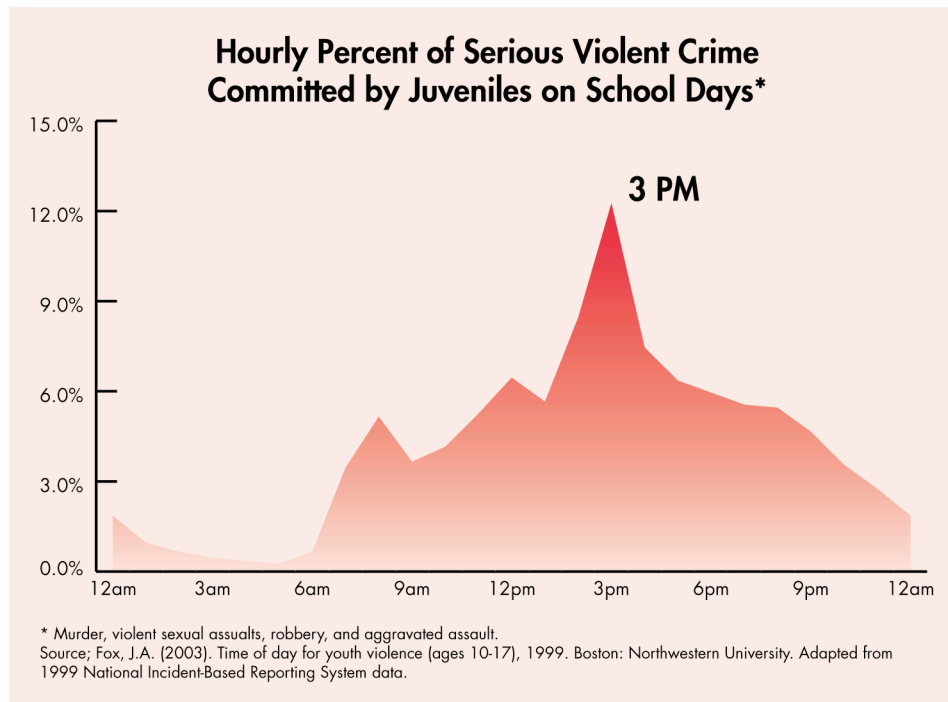
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Chairman Kildee and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Michael Carroll and I have served in various law enforcement positions in Chester County, Pennsylvania for forty-one years. For nineteen years, I have been Chief of West Goshen Township. I have previously served as President of the Chester County Police Chiefs Association, the Police Chiefs Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association and I am currently the 2nd Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. I am also a member of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS—an organization of over 3,500 police chiefs, prosecutors, sheriffs and violence survivors dedicated to examining the research on what makes kids more likely to commit criminal offenses, and the most effective ways to ensure that, instead, they are on the path toward lives of personal achievement and positive community contributions.

When violence occurs, punishment is important and necessary. But we must also invest in proven approaches that keep at-risk kids from committing crimes in the first place. The research, and my experience in law enforcement, show that quality afterschool programs do just that.

When the school bell rings, millions of children and teens head to the street with neither constructive activities nor supervision by caring, responsible adults—and violent juvenile crime soars. Research from across the country consistently shows that on school days, the hours from 3 to 6 pm are also the peak hours when children are most likely to become victims of crime, be in an automobile accident, smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.



Fortunately, quality afterschool programs can cut crime and transform the “prime time for juvenile crime” into hours of academic enrichment, constructive recreation and community service. For example, in a study conducted in several U.S. cities, five housing projects without Boys & Girls Clubs were compared to five receiving new clubs. At the beginning, drug activity and vandalism were the same. But by the time the study ended, the projects without the programs had 50 percent more vandalism and scored 37 percent worse on drug

activity. More than fifty years of research findings show Boys & Girls Clubs can successfully reduce crime. A recent study showed that specially designed anti-gang Boys & Girls Club programs can effectively recruit and retain children who are at high risk of becoming involved in gangs, and even youths who are already in gangs. The evaluation of the anti-gang Boys & Girls Club programs found that the high-risk children and teens in these clubs showed decreases in several gang and delinquent behaviors. These youth also exhibited positive changes in their engagement or achievement in school.

A study of San Francisco's Bayview Safe Haven afterschool program found that, among kids with prior histories of arrest, those who did not participate in the program were twice as likely to be arrested during the six-month initial intervention period as program participants. Among kids with no prior histories of arrest, those who did not participate were three times more likely than participants to be arrested during the same intervention period.

Unfortunately, not all out-of-school-time programs will produce solid results. Quality matters. Turning children away from involvement in crime takes well-designed programs with adequate numbers of caring, well-trained staff. In addition, to have maximum crime-prevention results, programs must target kids in the most at-risk areas as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program does. When we do invest in what works it has a big pay-off. Professor Mark A. Cohen, of Vanderbilt University, estimates that for each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime, the country saves up to \$7 million.

Despite the clear evidence that quality afterschool programs can prevent crime and improve other youth outcomes, there remains a dramatic shortage of after-school programs. Fourteen million children are left unsupervised after school each year.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is the federal government's principal afterschool program investment. Unfortunately, the program was reduced from \$1 billion to \$981 million in FY06, where it remained for FY07. For FY08, Congress provided an additional \$100 million in funding, for a total of just over \$1 billion—still far below the \$2.5 billion authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Given the inadequacy of current federal funding for afterschool programs, it was surprising and disturbing that the Administration recently proposed a deep cut of \$300 million for FY09—a 27% cut. That's one out of every four kids now served who would be out on the streets after school. The proposed cut in funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program would result in 300,000 fewer kids served by the program. Also troubling was a proposal that the program be reconstituted—from funding for the establishment and support of quality after school programs in high-need communities to funding for payments for individual kids to pay for after-school activities. This proposal is troubling in two ways: (1) it may lead to kids being relegated to lower quality programs, and (2) without seed money to establish programs, many high-need communities won't even have an afterschool program, so kids will lose out on afterschool opportunities altogether.

The proposed cut and restructuring are policy directions that would result in fewer afterschool opportunities for at-risk youth, and would make our communities and all our citizens more vulnerable to crime—with all of crime's costs, both financial and human.

Instead, the No Child Left Behind Act reauthorization, now awaiting action in this Committee, provides an opportunity to expand and strengthen the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Although these

programs are available to all grade levels, elementary school students are the group most frequently targeted for services by the centers. About half of the centers serve elementary school students exclusively, and at least two thirds of all centers serve some elementary students. Only 20 percent of the centers exclusively target middle school students and only 5 percent of centers exclusively target high school students. We recommend that new, increased resources be designated for after-school for at-risk middle and high school students who now experience the greatest unmet need—and are at greatest risk of perpetrating or being victims of crime.

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. I commend the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education for drawing attention to the need to reject the Administration's proposal to cut the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program by \$300 million, as well as its ill-advised proposal to voucherize the program. I urge Congress to, instead, substantially increase funding to support and expand afterschool programs that offer kids constructive activities during the peak hours of juvenile crime. Thank you.