



Name: _____

Your Address or Your Program's Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Date: _____

Dear (name of Congressional Rep.) _____,

I am a (parent/youth/staff) _____ from the Family Focus (school name) _____ 21st Century Program. Our program needs your continued support of the current \$1.16 billion funding level for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative in order to ensure that two million children in-need around the country and **over 50,000 children in Illinois** don't lose access to the local school-community partnerships that provide quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities.

21st Century afterschool programs are locally designed, innovative supports that meet critical needs for low-income students and families. Programs also provide a safe haven that helps kids avoid risky behaviors during the hours of 3-6 pm, when juvenile crime peaks. 21st Century-funded efforts are improving student academic performance, student engagement and attendance, supporting sustained family engagement with schools, and expanding learning time.

Family Focus has received 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants since 2003. In that time, 45 Illinois schools have provided services from Pre-K to 12th grade students and their families before school, after school, on weekends, on non-school days and during the summer. In 2016, **Family Focus 21st Century programs leveraged over \$833k in additional resources** for students and families (materials, staff, training, etc.). Programs served 16 schools and 1,711 students. Of those students, 40% increased their reading and math grades. **Of those students with failing math and reading grades (D or F), 52% increased their grades to a C or higher by the end of the school year.** Surveys of 21st Century participants' teachers indicated that 67% of students improved their participation in class and academic performance. Notably, 85% of parents surveyed reported their child had improved behavior and attitudes towards school. (Family Focus 21st Century Local Annual Evaluations, 2016)

My 21st Century program has helped me in the following ways: _____

Families count on afterschool and summer programs to keep kids safe and provide them with opportunities to learn while school is out, yet many communities are struggling to meet the needs of families. The demand for afterschool programs far exceeds the supply, and that affects us all. **In Illinois, only 18% of students are lucky enough to be in an afterschool program, but 41% of students would participate in an afterschool program if one were available.**

I need my afterschool program because _____

Given the lifelong benefits, the strong research base behind afterschool, and the documented returns on investment, I strongly urge Congress to maintain support for the 21st Century initiative at last year's level of \$1.16 billion.

Sincerely,

(Sign Your Name)

(Print Your Name)