

Dear Friend:

I recently offered testimony before the Appropriations Subcommittee that has jurisdiction over afterschool funding. As you likely know, the President's budget includes a recommended cut in afterschool funds, an action that I believe would be a grave mistake. I thought you might be interested in my comments. If you have any questions or comments, I invite you to contact me at <http://boxer.senate.gov/contact/webform.cfm> .

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

TESTIMONY OF U.S. SENATOR BARBARA BOXER ON AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS BEFORE THE LABOR-HHS APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

I would first like to bring to your attention an advertisement printed in the New York Times yesterday. One arm of the federal government, the Administration's Office of National Drug Control Policy agrees that afterschool programs keep kids safe and away from drugs. A full-page advertisement from the Drug Control Policy Office states that "kids involved in after school activities are less likely to use drugs."

Meanwhile, based on one study on afterschool programs conducted for the Department of Education, the President's Budget has proposed a \$400 million cut to afterschool programs because the President concluded that afterschool programs do not work.

If Congress goes along with the Administration's proposed funding cut, 570,000 kids already in programs will be turned out onto the streets. This deep, unprecedented cut would leave lots of children behind after school - not just leave them behind, but leave them home alone or leave them to join a gang.

However, this is not even the full story. In 2001, I teamed up with Senator John Ensign in offering an amendment to the No Child Left Behind bill to authorize funding for afterschool programs. It passed the Senate 60-39 - the first afterschool amendment ever to pass the Senate on a roll call vote. As enacted, authorized funding for afterschool programs increases \$250 million each year until it reaches \$2.5 billion by 2007. This would cover 4 million kids.

By not funding afterschool programs at the level promised - \$1.75 billion - 1.6 million children will be left behind. We cannot let this happen. A bipartisan letter that I circulated - signed by 3 Democrats and 3 Republicans - was recently sent to you Mr. Chairman, urging full funding of afterschool programs.

The federal afterschool program is vital to so many children and families across America. I would like take a moment to share just two stories of the millions of stories.

As a first grader at Langdon Elementary School in North Hills, Mauricio faced the strong possibility that his lifestyle would be one of gangs, crime, drugs and violence. Instead, he became one of the first participants in LA's BEST afterschool program when he was in the first grade. Through LA's BEST, Mauricio came into contact with police officers, tutors and others who gave him an alternative to gang life. Mauricio continued to be a part of LA's BEST by working at the Langdon site all through high school. Mauricio said, "I saw a lot of young people doing drugs and crime and dying [when I was growing up] but today, I am the first member of my family to attend college." After graduation from college, Mauricio plans to be a teacher because

"young people need someone to look up to and someone to help them - I want to give them what people gave to me."

A second story: Jerry had received several written warnings for his behavior during the regular school day. During a parent conference, it was discovered that problems existed at home, too. Jerry was "hanging" with gang members and beginning to act like them - and he was only 10-years old. Rallying their resources, his concerned parents began to work with the LA's BEST site coordinator and school staff to ensure close supervision of Jerry while he was on the playground (where his gang member friends would be looking for him). Family counseling and increased emphasis on academics were also part of the plan. Soon Jerry was involved in computer and geometry classes, the science club and the LA's BEST sports program, where he led his teams to several tournaments. LA's BEST kept Jerry off the streets and out of a gang.

But it's more than these 2 examples. Dozens of respected, independent studies - some of them going into great depth and conducted over many years - confirm that afterschool programs keep children safe, reduce crime and drug use, and improve academic performance.

For example, an evaluation of the Sacramento START afterschool program compared students who participated in afterschool programs and those who did not. Among students who were low performing in reading and writing on state tests, those who participated in afterschool programs improved their scores 3 times greater than those who did not participate.

Mr. Chairman, I have visited some 20 afterschool programs all around California, from LA's BEST to Sacramento START, to programs in San Diego and San Francisco, among many others. I have talked with students, parents, and instructors to understand how to give every child the best quality experiences after the school bell rings. When doing so, it is obvious how important afterschool programs are to keeping our children safe, keeping them out of gangs, and keeping them off drugs.

As the Senate begins working on this year's appropriations bills, I hope that you will get us back on track to fully funding afterschool programs.

Finally, I would like to mention another Californian who has become a tireless advocate for afterschool programs. Since accepting the National Chair of "Lights on Afterschool" in 2001, Arnold Schwarzenegger has brought attention to the importance of afterschool programs throughout California and across country. I am so pleased to see him here today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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For more information on Senator Boxer's record and other information, please go to:

<http://boxer.senate.gov>

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