



January 2025

Dear Governor JB Pritzker,

We write to you today to emphasize the critical importance of afterschool programs for Illinois' children and families and request swift action to support these life-changing initiatives. Afterschool programs support academic success and address pressing social and economic challenges, providing safe, structured environments where young people can grow and thrive. Expanding funding for these programs is a vital step toward building a stronger and more equitable Illinois. We ask that you

- 1) Work with ISBE and the General Assembly to release the \$50 million from the FY25 budget for afterschool programs.
- 2) Include a continued investment in afterschool in the Governor's FY26 budget by including the following line items.
 - a) **Maintain the \$50 million annual appropriation to fund community learning centers supporting afterschool programs and community schools.** The \$50 million appropriation from FY25 has still not been released by ISBE. It is imperative that this funding becomes a sustained investment to ensure the sustainability of afterschool programs in Illinois.
 - b) **Increase Teen REACH funding to \$27.3 million.** Teen REACH programs have not received rate increases to address the increased costs associated with inflation, materials, and the number of youth they serve and funding was reduced in FY25.
 - c) **Fund the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at \$3.2 billion,** with at least \$55 million designated to cover an expected increase in CCAP participation.
 - d) **Maintain funding at \$6 million for After School Matters.** This funding line will enable After School Matters to continue supporting teens across Chicago with paid opportunities to develop critical skills for work, college, and beyond.
 - e) **Allocate \$25 million to the Illinois State Board of Education's After School Programs line.**
 - f) **Appropriate \$202 million for ICJIA's Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) program.**

Research shows that students who participate in afterschool programs demonstrate improved academic performance, higher graduation rates, and better attendance. These programs offer tailored academic support and enrichment opportunities that complement classroom learning. For many working families, afterschool programs are a critical lifeline, allowing parents to focus on their jobs without worrying about their kids' safety or well-being. These programs reduce exposure to unsafe conditions and provide peace of mind for parents. Afterschool programs also provide access to resources and opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach for low-income students.

Afterschool programs are proven to contribute significantly to community safety by keeping young people engaged in positive activities during the hours when they are most at risk of encountering unsafe situations. These programs offer a safe and supportive space, reducing the likelihood of involvement in



risky behaviors and exposure to violence. Expanding funding for these programs is a crucial step toward building stronger, safer, and more prosperous communities across Illinois.

Current funding levels leave too many children without access to the services they need, particularly in areas most affected by poverty, gun violence, and systemic inequities. In Illinois, for every 1 child enrolled in an afterschool program, 4 are waiting for an available program.

The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. As of June 30, 2024, grants for 291 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) throughout Illinois concluded, resulting in 45% of programs having closed. The repercussions have been devastating with nearly 27,000 students having already lost access to programming and over 2,000 jobs having been lost.

These closures not only deprive children and adolescents of safe, supportive environments for growth and learning but also strip families of critical childcare and wraparound services—particularly in communities grappling with persistent challenges such as gun violence. Parents have been left scrambling for solutions as afterschool programs have shut down, limiting their ability to work and contribute to our local economy. Moreover, the loss of institutional knowledge and community connections as long-standing programs shut their doors is a blow to Illinois' educational and social infrastructure.

Decades of evidence confirm that afterschool programs and community schools are transformative models for student success. These programs enhance academic achievement, foster social and emotional development, and provide critical support to working families. Illinois may be facing financial challenges, but we cannot afford to return to the crisis that was the budget impasse. It's taken a decade to recover from the cuts to social programs that cost entire communities. The only way for Illinois to dig ourselves out of this financial hole is to invest in our people so they can continue to live, work, and build their lives in Illinois. That investment starts with our children.

We ask that your Fiscal Year 2026 budget reflects the importance of afterschool programs and helps to ensure that programs do not close their doors next year.

Sincerely,

Elected Officials:

Theresa Mah, State Representative of District 24
Byron Sigcho Lopez, Alderman of the 25th Ward
Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez, Alderperson of the 33rd Ward
Andre Vasquez, Alderperson of the 40th Ward
Maria Hadden, Alderwoman of the 49th Ward

Organizations:

Association House of Chicago
Alternative Schools Network
America SCORES Chicago



Belvidere Family YMCA
Bloomington-Normal YMCA
Bob Freesen YMCA
Boys & Girls Club of Elgin
Boys & Girls Club of North Central Illinois
Boys & Girls Club of Central Illinois
Boys & Girls Club of Chicago
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
BUILD, Inc.
Burroughs Elementary CPS
Cairo CUSD 1
Carole Robertson Center for Learning
Cass County Health Department
Centro Sanar
Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education
Chicago Center for Art & Technology
Chicago Learning Exchange
Solorio High School, CPS District 299
Chicago Run
Chinese American Service League
Clay County Health Department
Colona School District #190
Community Consolidated School District 15
Community Crisis at Saint Anthony Hospital
Compass for Kids, Inc.
Complement Consulting Group
Concordia Place
CW Avery Family YMCA
Dr Pedro Albizu Campos High School
Du Quoin Community Unit School District #300
East Moline School District 37
East Side Aligned
Enlace Chicago
Erie Neighborhood House
Family Focus
Get Out And Learn Something Inc.
Girls in the Game
Greater Peoria Family YMCA
HandsOn Suburban Chicago
Harold Colbert Jones Memorial Community Center
ICOY
Illinois State Alliance of YMCAs



Kankakee Area YMCA
Lilac House Childcare
M.A.D.E. Foundation
Martin Luther King Center
McKinley Lakeside Leadership Academy
Metropolitan Family Services
Mujeres Latinas en Accion
Next Generation
Nozari Legal, LLC
Peck Elementary School
Project Success of Vermilion County
Project: VISION
Reaching for Kids and Youth of Massac County
Regional Office of Education #33
Serco
SGA Youth & Family Services
Shield Elementary, CPS #299
Skokie-Morton Grove District 69
Soul Loveth Wellness Circle
Sterling-Rock Falls YMCA
Streator Family YMCA
Syrian Community Network
The ARK of St. Sabina
The Baby Fold
The Puerto Rican Cultural Center
Thresholds
Trico CUSD #176
Urban Initiatives
West Town Academy
Y.O.U.
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
YMCA of Rock River Valley
YMCA of Springfield
You Matter 2
Youth & Opportunity United

Individuals including students, parents, out-of-school time professionals, business owners, and community leaders:

Abby Rodriguez
Adam Wagener
Adele Martel



Adrian Fonseca
Adriana Rivera
Alan Vo
Alexa Ramirez
Alexandra Flores
Allison Kuyvenhoven
Allison Shackelford
Allison Sims
Alonda Smith
Alyssa Alvarado
Alyssa Langston
Amy Rasmussen
Amy Vogt
Ana Granados
Andi Durbin
Andres Lagunas
Andy Thornton
Andy Baker
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Angela DePizzo
Angela Offord
Angelica Rodriguez
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Beatrice Siler
Bianca Rosado
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Brent Pentenburg
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Domingo Casanova
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Martha E.
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Matthew Noack
Mayra Tellez
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Michelle Valdovinos
Mike Ruff
Mimi LeClair
Mimi Tsang
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Misael Contreras
Molly Berendt
Montana Lechner
Nancy Aguilar
Nancy Johnson
Natalia Diaz
Natalie Hubler
Natalie Milo-Nicolasin
Neda Nozari
Nia Shelton
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