

Dear Colleagues:

In June 2009, Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Representatives Phil Hare (D-IL) and Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO) introduced companion bills in the Senate and House that will help establish and improve quality rural afterschool programs. The Investment in Rural Afterschool Programs Act (S.1281/H.R.3078) are identical bills that help address the unique challenges of afterschool in rural communities.

The initial list of endorsing organizations included the Afterschool Alliance, Save the Children, the American Association of School Administrators and the National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition. Before beginning to solicit additional co-sponsors for this legislation, we'd like to build a strong list of endorsing organizations and we hope you'll consider adding your organization to the list. Please contact Erik Peterson at [epeterson@afterschoolalliance.org](mailto:epeterson@afterschoolalliance.org) or 202-347-2030 to have your organization added to the list. See below for additional details on the bills and attached for the letters of endorsement.

### ***The Challenges of Rural Afterschool Programs***

- There is a need for a greater focus and investment in afterschool programs in rural America, where nearly three million children living in poverty have limited access to the programs and the opportunities for growth they desperately need.
- The establishment and expansion of afterschool programs in rural settings face unique barriers, such as high transportation costs, a lack of private partners, competition for limited community facilities, a limited tax base and the difficulties of recruiting and retaining skilled staff.

### ***The Investment in Rural Afterschool Programs Act***

- Establishes or improves rural afterschool programs by authorizing grants of \$25,000 or more to education agencies, community-based organizations, or other public or nonprofit organizations for a period of no less than three years.
- The bill authorizes funding for the program over a 5-year period beginning with \$25 million in FY 2010, \$50 million in FY 2011 and such sums as are necessary in FY 2012 through FY 2014.
- Grant funds would allow rural programs to overcome barriers to service and meet a variety of needs, including transportation; professional development and training; access to technology; recruitment and retention of staff; and planning grants.
- The grants would be administered by the Department of Agriculture and would prioritize programs with high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced price lunches.
- To encourage partnerships within the community between public and private entities, grant priority would also be given to applicants with existing partnerships.
- To advance student academic achievement and promote positive youth development, eligible programs can provide services such as academic enrichment; youth development activities; drug and violence prevention programs; counseling programs; art and music; physical fitness and recreation programs; technology education programs; character education programs and service-learning programs.
- To maintain their physical well-being and help provide youth with skills and knowledge they can adopt to live a healthier life, eligible programs must provide a nutritious snack or meal that meets the nutrition standards set by the USDA.
- The bill also provides funds for evaluation and dissemination of best practices for serving children and youth in rural areas.