



## **New Jersey's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Face Uncertainty as Federal Funds Withheld, Impacting Thousands of Working Families**

*Ebony D. Grace, Chief Executive Officer, NJSACC: New Jersey's Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Professional Network*

The Federal Administration's decision to freeze \$142.8 million in K–12 education funding is a betrayal to New Jersey's students, families, and our economy. These dollars were approved by Congress and committed by states and local communities months ago. Families are counting on these funds to ensure their children are safe, engaged, and learning while school is out.

New Jersey stands to lose more than \$30 million in 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funds. This puts at risk 67 local grantees, including 34 school districts, 4 colleges and universities, and 29 community-based organizations, such as 8 Boys & Girls Clubs and 3 YMCAs that are trusted anchors in their neighborhoods. See the full list here: [NJ 21st CCLC grantees](#).

Afterschool and summer learning programs are essential for working parents and our workforce. Nationally, lack of reliable afterschool care costs businesses up to \$300 billion a year in lost productivity. In New Jersey, half of our providers now have waitlists for their programs because demand far outweighs supply — up dramatically since last year. Families rely on these programs so parents can work to support their families, knowing their kids are safe and cared for.

Our programs are doing more than ever. Nearly all NJ programs provide students with academic enrichment (98%), homework help (96%), and STEM opportunities (87%). They also provide critical supports like nutritious snacks and meals (91%), physical activity (96%), and a safe space to build social-emotional skills. These are the building blocks of a stronger future workforce.

This funding not only supports academic enrichment, it supports snacks and meals for hungry children. It provides a space to talk about mental health. It gives working parents peace of mind and children a place to belong.

Pulling these funds will not just eliminate opportunities for kids, it will mean lost jobs for youth development professionals, educators, and staff. Providers are already struggling with staffing shortages and rising costs. Nearly half say they've had to raise wages and provide bonuses just to keep positions filled. Cutting funding now will force layoffs, reduce hours, and could close programs altogether, hurting families, local economies, and the broader workforce.

This decision flies in the face of what families want: 87% of voters — Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike — say afterschool programs are an absolute necessity.



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New Jersey's working families, youth, and local economies simply cannot afford this betrayal. NJSACC joins parents, educators, and voters across the state in demanding the immediate release of these vital funds. Our students, families and work force deserve better — and we will not stop advocating on their behalf.

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### About NJSACC

NJSACC: New Jersey's Afterschool & Out-of-School Time Professional Network has supported New Jersey's afterschool community for more than four decades. NJSACC's purpose is to address the challenges that the Out-of-School Time (OST) profession faces including equity, access, capacity, and connections towards creating a strong, valued profession benefitting youth, families, and communities. Learn more at <https://www.njsacc.org/about-njsacc/>.

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