

TESTIMONY
OF
MICHAEL COHEN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
BEFORE
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Good morning, Chairman Castle, and members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to speak with you today about the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. Children and youth need a safe and enriching environment to learn and grow in their afterschool hours. Community members need a neighborhood center where they can learn new skills or work with neighborhood kids. 21st Century Community Learning Centers are places where children can thrive -- where learning, enrichment, and recreational activities complement the regular school day and where there is life-long learning for all members of the community. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program provides grants to inner-city and rural schools and school districts, working in close cooperation with community organizations and other educational and youth development agencies, to provide expanded learning opportunities and other activities outside of the regular school hours for children and adults in a safe and healthy environment.

Demand for the Program

According to the new report, *Safe and Smart II*, soon to be published by the Departments of Education and Justice, 69 percent of all married-couple families with children ages 6-17 have both parents working outside the home; in 71 percent of single-mother families and 85 percent of single-father families with children

ages 6-17 the custodial parent is working. The gap between parents' work schedules and their children's school schedules can amount to 20 to 25 hours per week.

According to statistics provided by the GAO, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, and other surveys, the lack of affordable, accessible afterschool opportunities for school-age children means that an estimated 5 to 7 million, and up to as many as 15 million, "latchkey children" on any given day go home to an empty house after school. Forty-four percent of third graders spend at least a portion of their out-of-school time unsupervised, and about 35 percent of twelve-year-olds are left by themselves regularly while their parents are at work. In some urban areas, the current supply of afterschool programs for school-age children will meet as little as 20 percent of the demand. (GAO, 1997). As a result, millions of parents – and their children – worry anew each day about where their children will go, and what they will be doing.

The Administration's proposal for expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program will help keep more of our young people and community members safe and free from drug use, gang involvement, and violence. Studies by the FBI and youth-advocacy groups have found that the peak hours for juvenile crime and victimization are from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. -- hours when youth are

most often without supervision. Yet we know that students who spend 1-4 hours per week in extracurricular activities are 50 percent less likely to use drugs and one-third less likely to become teen parents.

In nearly 600 communities across the nation, children now have an alternative to unsupervised, unstructured and uninspiring afternoons – 21st Century Community Learning Centers. In 2,100 schools, new Centers are beginning to provide safe havens for youth, supervised activities, and services focusing on learning enhancement as well as on preventing crime, violence, and substance abuse. With the help of national partners, 21st Century Community Learning Centers are designing and implementing learning, cultural and developmental activities that are interesting and engaging for young people and their families.

By locating 21st Century Community Learning Centers within schools, we ensure that students receive educational services directly linked to their classroom needs. Principals have long seen a need for extended learning programs; in a 1989 survey, 84 percent of school principals agreed that there is a need for before- and afterschool programs. In December 1999, the National Association of Elementary School Principals updated an earlier publication for their membership on quality standards for afterschool programs entitled, *After-School Programs & The K-8 Principal*, recognizing that “an extraordinary opportunity exists for principals to

bring their schools and communities together to plan and support after-school programs.”

Current Operation of the Program

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program awards grants to rural and inner-city public schools, or consortia of such schools, to enable them to plan, implement, or expand projects that benefit the educational, health, social services, cultural and recreational needs of the community. Grants awarded under this program are used to establish or expand centers, located within the public schools, which offer a broad array of high-quality services to the children and to the neighborhood at large.

Rural or inner-city public elementary, middle, or secondary schools, consortia of such schools, or local educational agencies (LEAs, usually school districts) applying on behalf of their schools are eligible to receive a grant under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. The program is designed to serve high-need rural and urban communities that have low-achieving students and

high rates of juvenile crime, school violence, and student drug abuse, but lack the resources to establish afterschool centers. *is-eligible, projects which ... comp. priority* Grants must be administered by the

public schools, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers must be located in public schools. However, in designing and delivering services, schools *must*

collaborate with public and nonprofit agencies and organizations, local businesses, educational entities (such as vocational and adult education programs, school-to-work programs, community colleges, and universities), recreational, cultural, and other community and human service entities.

The 21st Century program is a competitive grant program in which schools and districts apply directly to the Department of Education for funding. All applications are reviewed by panels of experts and practitioners, and the highest-rated proposals are selected for funding. These ratings are based on criteria which include the community's need for the program, the quality of the project design, the effective use of resources to support program activities, and a strong evaluation and management plan. The rigorous, competitive nature of this program requires local educators to collaborate with a range of partners to identify the needs of the children and community members, and design high-quality programs to address those needs.

To ensure that districts can prepare high-quality applications, the Department of Education has worked for the past three years with the C.S. Mott Foundation, the National Center for Community Education, the National Community Education Association, and other regional and local organizations to provide numerous technical assistance and support opportunities for communities interesting in

applying. Workshop attendance over the past two years has been remarkable – 13,000 representatives from families, schools, community and civic organizations, local governments, foundations, faith-based organizations, and businesses came together to find out what quality, extended learning programming is, how to collaborate, and what are some models of best practice. For this year's competition, at least one workshop is being provided in every State.

The investment in assisting local communities to plan afterschool and community education programs seems to be paying off. Last year, over 2,000 local communities applied for a 21st Century afterschool grant. In total, applicants requested almost \$900 million in assistance, despite the fact that only \$93 million was available for that competition. The Department was able to make awards to only a small percentage of the applications we received; hundreds of applications that were recommended for funding by reviewers could not be funded. We believe that this year we again will receive hundreds of high-quality applications beyond those 350-450 that we will be able to fund.

Current Status of the Program

Now, in roughly 600 communities, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is increasing the supply of high-quality, afterschool programs operated as part of community schools. This relationship is significant because it

provides programming in a cost-effective manner, primarily by funding programs that use public schools and their existing resources and that build partnerships with community-based and youth organizations. Community-based organizations can bring to an afterschool program their experience in administering youth-development services. Community coalitions have the flexibility to decide, with the school, their priorities for extended learning -- before-school programs, afterschool learning opportunities, weekend activities, or summer enrichment programs.

I would like to briefly describe the progress we have made in the last two years to provide high-quality, school-based afterschool programs to communities.

Of the \$453 million that has been appropriated this fiscal year:

- \$200 million provides continuation funding to about 1,600 afterschool programs operating in 468 communities;
- \$65 million has been committed to fund 125 high-quality grant applications that we could not fund last fiscal year. These communities will be starting new programs in about 500 schools this spring and summer; and
- a competition is now underway that will provide \$185 million in grants to an additional 350-450 communities to begin programs next school year.

These 2,100 Centers are located in 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and will be serving about 400,000 children and about 200,000 adults. Just over half the participating schools serve rural communities, and the remainder are serving inner-cities.

By surveying our grantees and by analyzing the applications submitted by communities we are funding, we know that 21st Century Community Learning Centers are providing services to the communities with the greatest needs: in over three-quarters of the participating schools, more than 50 percent of the children

qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. In addition, the percentage of children who are Limited-English proficient are higher in the schools we have funded than in those that applied but did not receive funding.

In working with our private partners to provide technical assistance to schools and communities across the country, we have stressed the importance of community partnerships and of providing an array of high-quality services. If we examine the grantees' partners, and the services they are providing, it appears that these messages have been well received.

Looking across all of our 1998 and 1999 grantees:

- 88 percent in 1998 and 97 percent in 1999 have partnerships with community-based organizations (including organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and 4-H as well as faith-based organizations); 71 percent with other government agencies; 63 percent with businesses; 47 percent with local law enforcement agencies; and 34 percent with libraries and museums.

We also have early data that describe the kinds of services that programs are offering to children and other community members. The services being offered are very consistent with those that parents and children say they need and want, including:

- reading (85 percent), math (80 percent), science (66 percent), and tutoring and homework assistance (83 percent);
- recreational activities (89 percent), music (56 percent), art (68 percent); and nutrition and health (74 percent); and
- services to adult members of the community (80 percent), including but not limited to intergenerational literacy activities, English as a foreign language (ESL) programs, GED and vocational programs, technology training and access, and parenting classes.

Based on progress reports and survey data from all of our current grantees, we have learned that:

- The typical afterschool program operates for just over 17 hours per week.
- About two-thirds of the programs are offering summer services, which average just over 30 hours per week.
- Over one-half the grantees are using USDA food and nutrition programs to provide snacks or meals, and about 71 percent provide transportation for project participants.

Communities that have been participating in the program since its first year (1998) also report that:

- They are making significant progress toward meeting the program's performance indicators. In fact, three of the indicators – providing core educational services, providing enrichment and support activities, and student enjoyment of the programs – have been met by *all* of the grantees.
- Schools with committed community and higher education partners -- as opposed to those with only tenuous relationships -- appear to have implemented more exciting and innovative programs.
- Programs with thorough, well-planned goals and objectives appear to be making progress in a timely manner.
- Most programs are reporting improvements -- sometimes dramatic -- in student attendance and a decrease in participants' disciplinary problems.

These overall findings about the program can be illustrated by a closer look at what selected programs have been able to accomplish, even in such a short time.

For instance:

- ***Programs are delivering a range of services.*** In Tucson, Arizona, Project *Sano y Salvo* (Safe and Sound) exemplifies the range of services that 21st Century

Community Learning Centers (CLC) can provide. Approximately 1,000 students in three middle schools participate in this program, receiving academic tutoring, enrichment in math, science, reading, writing, and technology, homework assistance, and expanded library and computer lab access. The program operates afternoons, evenings, weekends, and during the summer. At the Wayne State Charter School CLC in Detroit, Michigan, services include a mentoring program, tutoring, a 'Saturday Academy' (academic help), technological awareness for parents, drug awareness, conflict resolution, fine/performing arts appreciation, self-esteem development, health studies, and counseling services.

- ***Programs are beginning to document student achievement gains.*** For instance, in Hillsdale, Michigan, 36 percent of the math students, 37 percent of the English students, and 44 percent of students overall showed increases in turning in homework and class participation grades. In Three Rivers, Michigan, there was, according to the Three Rivers Police Department, a decrease in youth crime rates in 1999. The Community Learning Center there serves 117 students with academic and 4-H clubs, drug awareness programs, and one-on-one tutoring program. At the Brethren, Michigan, Middle School CLC, all are considered to be "at-risk" students, but behavioral referrals have dropped

significantly. The CLC offers a "Walk About" program in which students perform service projects for local nursing homes, the fire department, elementary schools, strawberry farms, and a local migrant center, and local businesses have contributed funds and supplies.

Who Is Involved in the Effort

The overwhelming success of this program is due in part to the unique public-private partnerships between the Department of Education and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. With the Department of Education providing funding for direct services, the Mott Foundation has pledged \$83 million over six years to provide "quality activities." These activities include: technical assistance and training for the multi-year expansion of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, evaluation of community schools and afterschool programs, building public support, and encouraging access and equity in programming. This relationship has spawned many other partnerships at the national, State, and local levels such as the Afterschool Alliance, a unique afterschool partnership between government, foundations, the entertainment industry, media, and business.

For all these reasons and more, the Administration is requesting \$1 billion in its fiscal year 2001 budget before Congress for Community Learning Centers. At this level of funding, a new competition would yield approximately 6,000 new

centers, bringing the total number of centers to approximately 10,000. If Congress supports expanding the program from its current \$453 million in 2000 to \$1 billion in 2001, it will provide extended-hour school services for approximately 2.5 million children per year. This investment in 21st Century Community Learning Centers program would help ensure that every child in every failing school has extended learning opportunities in the afterschool and summer hours. The Administration's FY2001 budget will maintain the commitment to serving all children, but will target much of the increase to help those children most in need of academic assistance as part of a comprehensive approach to help low-achieving students meet high academic standards. *A competitive priority will be awarded to schools that show school improvement that leads to high quality*

Our reauthorization proposal builds upon the strengths of the current program including the use of school facilities to benefit the entire community and the requirement to establish strong collaborations with community organizations while offering some revisions designed to better target resources and promote the sustainability of programs. *to help schools reach challenging academic standards*

During the remainder of the reauthorization process, the Administration intends to work with Congress to obtain enactment of a bill that makes changes along the following lines: (1) converting the authority to a formula grant program once it reaches an appropriate funding level (except that the Department would

continue to administer the direct grants made prior to the conversion); (2) requiring States to distribute funds within the State through competitive subgrants, giving priority to applications from LEAs that are in Title I “corrective action” or “school improvement” status; (3) encouraging sustainable programs by extending the grant period to 5 years while requiring grantees to pay 50 percent of the cost of any project; and (4) allowing a percentage of awards to be made directly to community-based organizations.

By providing safe and enriching high-quality afterschool programs in community school settings, like those available through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, we can all help prepare our children for the 21st Century. We look forward to working with the Committee as reauthorization of the program moves forward.