



NEWS RELEASE
July 15, 2003

CONTACT: Gretchen Wright
202/371-1999

Nation's Top Afterschool Leaders Urge Congress to Support AmeriCorps

WASHINGTON, DC – More than 40 national and state leaders from the afterschool community today sent an unprecedented letter to Members of Congress urging them to support \$100 million in emergency funding for AmeriCorps. The program is facing a 40 to 55 percent cut, which would reduce by more than 20,000 the number of AmeriCorps volunteers in the 2003-2004 academic year.

The letter's signers represent the nation's leading afterschool organizations. Among others, signers include leaders from: Academy for Educational Development; Afterschool Alliance; The After-School Corporation; Citizen Action of New York; Citizen Schools; Forum for Youth Investment; Foundations, Inc.; Inner-City Games; LA's BEST; Massachusetts 2020; National Institute for Out of School Time; and United Way of Rhode Island. The letter says, in part:

Afterschool programs need AmeriCorps. So do America's parents, schools and businesses. That's why we urge you to help solve the crisis confronting AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps volunteers expand the capacity of afterschool programs across the country, enabling them to serve hundreds of thousands more children and serve them well. AmeriCorps volunteers bring a combination of energy, idealism, talent and commitment to service that inspires and motivates young students. Children identify with AmeriCorps members and strive to emulate the positive values they put into practice.

"AmeriCorps volunteers do a tremendous amount to support our communities," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Judy Y. Samelson. "Afterschool programs in particular benefit from the work of these devoted volunteers. Cutting the AmeriCorps budget would mean that fewer children and families have access to the afterschool programs that keep kids safe, improve academic achievement and help working families. Now more than ever, America needs Congress to fund this essential program."

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, more than one-third of all AmeriCorps members play a role in supporting afterschool programs. The U.S. Senate approved the \$100 million supplemental appropriation last week by a vote of 71 to 21. House action on the AmeriCorps appropriation may come this week.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization supported by a group of public, private, and nonprofit entities dedicated to ensuring that all children and youth have access to afterschool programs by 2010. Actor and children's advocate Arnold Schwarzenegger is Honorary Chair of the Afterschool Alliance. Information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org

#