

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Date:

Dear Senator/Representative **(Last Name)**,

Thousands of students in Illinois will lose access to afterschool programs if we don't take action immediately. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) is federal funding used to support afterschool programs and administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). When programs were allowed to roll over funding during the pandemic for the first time, ISBE inaccurately forecasted available funding for programs. Due to ISBE's actions, there is no funding for the FY19 cohort when their contracts run out this summer. This means 12,000 students will lose access to afterschool programs and approximately 550 afterschool staff members will lose their jobs. Further, if ISBE does not find additional funds to stabilize other 21st CCLC grantees, this will affect more grantees and up to 27,000 students statewide. 80% of these students are people of color, including 30% being Black youth and 36% being Latinx youth. These students all attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Finally, over 80% of these employees are women and roughly 50% are people of color.

Youth and families need legislators to step in and help solve this problem through a legislative fix. We need \$12 million in stopgap funding in the FY24 state budget to keep FY19 programs going next year. We need an investigation into the causes of this issue and accountability measures at ISBE to prevent this from happening again.

Cutting funding to afterschool programs due to an administrative error is unacceptable. Youth academic and mental health needs are greater than ever since the pandemic, and these gaps are worse for youth of color and youth living in low-income communities. A large body of research shows that 21st CCLC programs can support students in the areas where they need it most post-pandemic. Please take action now!

Sincerely,

(Your Name)