



**Testimony of
The After-School Corporation**

Presented to the New York State Division of Budget

Friday, November 30, 2007

**Presented by
Rachel Sabella
Government Relations Manager**

Good Afternoon. My name is Rachel Sabella and I am the Government Relations Manager at The After-School Corporation (TASC), a not-for profit organization that supports after-school programs. I also represent the Coalition for After-School Funding (CASF), a statewide coalition with over 300 member groups that believe every child in New York State should have access to a quality after-school program. Our members include parents, students, after-school providers, law enforcement officials, childcare advocates, faith-based organizations and community groups. Before I begin, I'd like to thank the New York State Division of the Budget for the opportunity to testify today.

As you may know, TASC was established in 1998 by George Soros's Open Society Institute (OSI) and has helped more than 250,000 children over nine years by supporting after-school programs. TASC works in New York City, New York State and nationally to enhance the quality, availability and sustainability of comprehensive, daily after-school programs. The first nonprofit organization in the nation to set about building a citywide K-12 after-school system, TASC funds, monitors, evaluates and supports after-school programs in New York City public schools.

TASC is dedicated to building the after-school field by expanding training and college opportunities for after-school staff, and by strengthening

the alignment between school day and after-school learning. We develop measures of program quality and accountability, and share our lessons learned with after-school providers.

We support TASC model programs that operate every day school is in session from 3 to 6 PM, and innovate by developing new curricula and professional practices tailored to help kids achieve the best possible outcomes through after-school. TASC is developing new program models that complement school reform, expand student learning time, and meet the needs of all ages from kindergarten through high school.

TASC advocates and informs after-school policy by serving as a trusted advisor to a broad network of federal, state and local policymakers and elected officials. We are a partner and coalition builder among organizations that share a common mission of making after-school a public responsibility, and assuring that publicly funded programs are of high quality.

TASC-supported after-school programs are operated by community-based organizations (CBOs) with roots in the neighborhoods and schools they serve. In New York City, we partner with such CBOs as the YMCA, the Police Athletic League and the Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation. Our partnerships with CBOs ensure that programs provide a balanced range

of services for children and youth, that includes academics, art, and sports. Through our programs kids participate in homework help, tutoring, poetry, and community service.

As you contemplate next year's state budget, you need to know the current state of after-school. After-School funding is approaching a crisis in New York State and the state's support of after-school programs is needed now more than ever. After-school programs are still reeling from a recent funding crisis and need an infusion of \$30 million in new funds just to return to 2006 service levels.

The need in New York City for these after-school programs is far greater than the supply. According to the Citizen's Committee for Children, of the more than 1 million public school children in New York City, 450,000 youth are unserved and another 380,000 children are underserved. Statewide, the picture is equally bleak. According to Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, New York, nearly seven school-age New York children in every ten live in a household with a single parent who is working or two parents who are both working. On a regular basis, more than 800,000 New York children and teens are left unsupervised by adults. Last year, 34,000 after-school slots were lost (20,000 of which were in New York City) due to a funding shortfall to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

Due to a reduced commitment from the federal government for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the New York State Department of Education announced this past February that 207 programs whose funding would expire on June 30, 2007, would not have the opportunity to apply for new funds this year. This left 34,000 kids at risk of losing their after-school slots and 3,400 at risk of losing their jobs for this school year.

The New York State Assembly was able to add \$7.5 million to the 2008 state budget to help these programs extend services through November. We are extremely grateful for these funds. Although these extra funds allowed programs to extend services through the fall, once this funding expires at the end of the month, after-school will be forced to operate on a drastically reduced schedule, provide fewer services or even close their doors permanently. These closures have caused after-school staff to lose their jobs and forced parents to find alternative child care options for their children.

To ensure this situation does not happen again and that every school-age child has a safe place to go once the school-day ends, the after-school community is urging you to support an additional \$30 million in state

funding for after-school in the 2008-09 state budget to maintain the number of kids already served.

Some of the funding streams to consider include:

1. Advantage After-School Program. The Office of Children and Family Services reports roughly 26,000 children are currently enrolled in Advantage, which provides educational, cultural and recreational activities for elementary, middle and high school students. Since its inception, the program has received more qualified applicants than it can fund. Most recently, over 400 applicants submitted proposals for \$3.4 million in funding. Approximately only 40 programs were funded in the most recent round of awards.
2. Youth Development Delinquency Prevention/Youth Services Programs. The Youth Development and Delinquency Program (YDDP) is housed in the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and serves young people ages 6 to 21 through a broad spectrum of before- and after-school, weekend, and vacation initiatives that promote youth development. These programs are administered by local county youth bureaus and are the cornerstone of after-school funding to the counties. In New York City the Department of Youth and Community Development administers these funds

and has used these funds as the basis of New York's highly recognized Out of School Time initiative. YDDP is currently funded at \$29.5 million.

3. 2007 Legislative Increases to After-School. In the 2007 legislative session, due to a crisis in the loss of after-school slots the Assembly added \$13.925 million for after-school programs. Through this measure, school districts and former 21st Century Community Learning Center programs were able to keep many programs open for an additional year.
4. Extended Day/School Violence Prevention Program. An initiative managed through the State Education Department, Extended Day funds academic tutoring and remediation, conflict resolution/violence prevention, recreational and other programs for nearly 30,000 young people throughout the state. The program is currently funded at \$30.2 million.

The after-school community is more concerned with giving you our sense of the critical needs of after-school, rather than how the \$30 million should be distributed among the existing funding streams.

In addition, it's important to note that after-school programs are funded from a number of funding sources, and responsibility for the regulation and quality of after-school is split among more than one state agency, including the State Department of Education and the Office of Children and Family Services. We urge that state government explore ways

to more effectively coordinate all after-school funding streams and regulations, and to recommend a long-term policy and funding strategy with full input from all stakeholders and relevant agencies. Coordination and consolidation should be combined with a long-term investment in after-school as other states like California are doing. The \$30 million is a first step towards that long-term investment.

An increase in after-school funding is consistent with the state's significant investment in educational excellence through the enactment of the landmark school aid reform legislation passed last year to resolve the Campaign for Fiscal Equity litigation. Under the legislation, the state invested \$1.1 billion in 2007-08 in additional "foundation aid" to schools statewide (a \$1.76 billion increase in total school aid), and is mandated to increase foundation aid by more than the \$1.1 billion amount in 2008-09. The \$30 million increase we're seeking for after-school is small compared to the education increases, especially when you consider benefits of after-school in raising student achievement. By investing in quality after-school programs, New York can ensure that the progress children will make during the regular school day will continue in the 3-6 PM period, through such means as homework help and remedial assistance.

Working parents depend on after-school programs for child care. A study commissioned by TASC found that parents said after-school programs helped them balance work and family life, with 60 percent saying they missed less work than before their child was in the program, and 59 percent saying it supported them in keeping their job.

In addition to being a practical help to working parents, after-school programs benefit children. Curriculum developed by TASC complements what kids learn during the school day and gives kids opportunities for experiences that might not be available to them. In an educational climate of high-stakes testing, we know that many public schools in our city no longer have the time or the resources during the regular school day to provide young people with the enriched experiential and youth development activities that can support success. TASC-sponsored after-school programs provide our young people with such experiences and opportunities.

Over the past nine years, through research, TASC has learned that after-school programs offer tremendous value to children, families, schools and communities. We have engaged a highly regarded Washington, D.C.-based education policy research organization, Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (PSA), to evaluate the effectiveness of our after-school programs. PSA research shows:

- After-School Programs Improve Academic Achievement
- After-School Programs Encourage Positive Behavior
- After-School Programs Increase School Attendance
- After-School Programs Benefit Working Families

After-school programs are a cost-effective investment in our children. Quality after-school programs do not only provide for the well-being of children, they are being recognized nationally as a potent strategy to address educational achievement gaps among students. We cannot afford to ignore the need to enrich and protect our children during the after school hours.

As you begin the state budget process, I urge you to support a \$30 million increase in funding to these vital after-school programs that provide our children with a safe place to go once the school day ends. These programs benefit children, working families and the entire community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.