

NYS Budget Hearing: After-School Programs
Rochester, NY November 17, 2007
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I am writing as the President & CEO of Charles Settlement House, Inc. located in Rochester. Our agency provides an after-school program to students at School #17, a City elementary school. Our V.P. for Programs is a representative for Youth Services Quality Council on the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance.

A \$30 million increase in funding is needed to maintain the number of kids already being served. The \$30 million would replace 34,000 slots lost when the State Education Department did not provide the necessary funding for the "Cohort 1 funding cycle of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. In Rochester, this places 21 sites at risk. This increase would not address the total need of 600,000 slots for after-school in New York State.

After-school programs improve student achievement overall and result in higher school attendance, increased homework completion, better grades and work habits, and improved behavior at school. After-school programs promote greater parental involvement.

In our program, students also improve their neighborhood by doing community service. Each student must complete a minimum of 10 hours of service. The students have maintained a memorial garden, participated in neighborhood clean-ups and assisted with keeping the school grounds clean of litter.

After-school programs also provided opportunities for youth to be creative and to find their special talent. Examples are photography, dance, step dance, sport teams, and art. A student in our after-school program joined our photography club, won a city-wide contest that included professional photographers, and is now considering a career in photography.

Communities and neighborhoods without after-school programs are at greater risk for crime. When youth do not have access to positive leisure time activities, they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. The "Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York" survey found that teens unsupervised after-school were four times more likely to have smoked cigarettes, three times more likely to have had sex, and four times more likely to have used drugs than supervised teens.

After-school programs also support parents transitioning from welfare to work. Parents need to know their children are in a safe supervised environment. Parental involvement is greater with youth participating in after-school programs.

In closing, we need to spend our money wisely. Funding after-school programs at \$1400 per youth per year versus spending tens of thousands of dollars per year to incarcerate a juvenile in a secure facility in New York, is the best fiscal decision the state can make.