



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

February 11, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations

Dear Majority Leader Reid and Chairman Inouye:

As the Senate continues work on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, we urge you to include the nationwide expansion of the Afterschool Supper Program for children in low-income communities in the final version of the bill. This program, included in the House version of the bill, will create new jobs, boost local economies quickly, offer quality nutrition assistance and provide safe environments that help improve student achievement for low-income children.

The Afterschool Supper Program provides federal funding for suppers served to children up to age 18 at afterschool and youth development programs located in low-income areas. There are currently eight states—Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—that are participating in this important program. The remaining 42 states, as well as the District of Columbia, do not share in the same resources to provide nutritious food to children and teens. Expanding this program would improve the effectiveness of education outside of the classroom, as children continue their learning throughout the afternoon. The Afterschool Supper Program is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and all meals served must comply with USDA nutrition guidelines.

The Afterschool Supper Program could be an effective component of the economic recovery legislation. It would infuse federal funds directly into low-income rural, suburban, and urban communities across the country, creating jobs and business opportunities for local vendors and stores. It would support afterschool programs that foster educational achievement and keep children safe during the afterschool hours, when juvenile crime peaks and teenage girls are at the highest risk of becoming pregnant. The program already helps struggling parents stretch their food budget while sustaining extended afterschool programs that support many of these parents as they work non-traditional hours.

We urge you to include the expansion of the Afterschool Supper Program nationwide in the final recovery package. Funding for the Afterschool Supper Program would create jobs quickly—beginning in the spring of 2009 -- and help improve the nutrition, health and education outcomes for millions of low-income children.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

Senator Bill Nelson

B. Sanders

Senator Bernie Sanders

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Senator Sherrod Brown