November 18, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Full Service Community Schools Program

Dear Chairman Harkin and Chairman Obey,

The undersigned organizations call on Congress to continue to invest in the Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) Program in the FY11 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. There are now 21 FSCS grantees across the country and many more are seeking such support. It is critical that Congress continue funding for the FSCS program at an adequate level.

Local schools and communities continue to demonstrate demand for this funding. In the most recent round of awards, there were over 200 eligible applications. However, only 11 applications could be approved due to the limited funding. Many schools and communities stand ready to organize Full Service Community Schools if support is made available for a next round of grants.

We know that all students need highly effective teachers and principals, as well as quality, engaging instruction, and that schools must be accountable. Students face many challenges in their lives, their families and their communities that affect their success in school. Communities have much to bring to this challenge; and more must be done to fully engage them as partners with schools to meet these needs.

Research and experience tell us that our young people and their families need more learning time, more support, and more opportunities if they are to be successful. We can and we must do both, and Full Service Community Schools are the vehicle for making this happen. Community schools coordinate the assets of schools and communities to more efficiently and effectively meet students’ needs, including youth with disabilities, in and outside the classroom. Local citizens help to decide what happens in their schools and schools return to their historic role as centers of community where everyone works together to help young people succeed.

The services leveraged from the community—health and mental health, family support services, after school, enrichment, adult education, and more—enable teachers to concentrate on teaching and students to concentrate on learning. New research shows that community schools leverage at least $3 for every $1
invested by local education agencies. Communities throughout the country that have formed Full Service Community Schools produce remarkable results, ranging from better achievement to improved student attendance and reduced dropout rates.

Schools cannot by themselves shoulder the responsibility of educating our students. Working together, schools and communities can ensure that students receive the support they need to be successful in school, prepared for college, career, and citizenship.

Sincerely,

AED
Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Children and Families
American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
America’s Promise Alliance
ASCD
Asset Based Community Development Institute
Brooklyn Center Community Schools, MN
Coalition for Community Schools
Community Learning Center Institute, Cincinnati, OH
Council of Chief State School Officers
Developmental Studies Center
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, IN
Family Connection of Easton, Inc., PA
First Focus
Forum for Youth Investment
Full-service Schools Roundtable, MA
Illinois Federation for Community Schools
Institute for Education Leadership
Kent School Services Network, MI
Los Angeles Education Partnership
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Family Literacy
National Center for School Engagement
National Collaboration for Youth
National Community Education Association
National Education Association
National Summer Learning Association
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Netter Center for Community Partnerships, PA
National Institute on Out-of-School Time
Orangeburg Consolidated School District 5, SC
Oregon Commission of Children and Families
Public Education Network
Rural School and Community Trust
Save the Children
The Children’s Aid Society, NY
The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

The Local Investment Commission (LINC) – Kansas City, Mo.
The San Francisco Foundation
United Way Worldwide
Yale School of the 21st Century
Youth Development Institute