

For further information contact:
NYS Network for Youth Success
(703) 967-2808

Students, Parents and Afterschool Administrators Urge State Legislators to Increase Advantage After School Funding

Afterschool Programs Struggle to Maintain Services for 16,000 Students and Pay Staff Living Wages

Albany, NY – More than 350 afterschool advocates urged their State Legislators to increase funding for New York’s Advantage After School Program at meetings in Albany today. \$37.12 million is needed in the 2019 State Budget to cover the rising cost of salaries due to new minimum wage laws and to bring the per student rate into alignment with actual program costs.

“Without increased funding for afterschool programming, there will be a drastic impact on families, the community, and our youth,” said Westchester Jewish Community Services CEO Seth Diamond. “Parents need to know that their children are safe and supervised in the hours when school is over, but the workday is not. The quality programming afforded by Advantage After School benefits our children and our community.”

“Our afterschool seats are currently funded at 50% of the rate required to continue to meet the needs of our children and communities,” said Ramon Peguero, Esq., President and CEO of The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families. “While we are able to serve 250 elementary students in the Bronx, we have a significant wait list of families who still do not have access. Today, we join the collective voice to call on our legislators to move toward funding the quality and access to these valuable programs that our families deserve and have been waiting for.”

The Advantage After School Program serves more than 16,000 students in underserved communities at a rate of \$1,375 per student. This is considerably less than the actual cost of afterschool programming – which ranges from approximately \$3,000 per student in Buffalo to \$6,000 in New York City. That cost will increase considerably because of the impact of New York’s new minimum wage increases on salaries, which make up the largest part of afterschool program budgets.

“We love the Advantage program,” said Mandy Wojcik, a parent with children in the Capital District YMCA’s afterschool program. “The staff is great and always helpful. My girls gained leadership skills and learned how to work well with other kids. They look forward to it every day!”

“Afterschool programs are vital to our communities,” said Amy Alexander, Director of Youth Development for the Boys & Girls Club of Western Broome Family Center. “These programs provide a safe place for youth to go in the hours after school when, in many cases, their parents are still at work. By providing places where youth are being mentored by caring adults while their parents are at work, afterschool programs contribute to strengthening youth and their families, improving community safety, and meeting a basic need for economic stability in our communities.”

New York's Advantage After School Program enables students in low-income communities to receive supervised academic and developmental support for up to three hours immediately after school. Quality afterschool programs keep families working, support academic achievement and provide a safe environment during the peak hours of juvenile crime.

"State legislators understand the need for the Advantage After School Program," said Kelly Sturgis, Executive Director of the New York State Network for Youth Success. "Without an increase in funding to maintain this program, many parents will struggle to find safe places for their children to go after school – and some will not be able to continue to work. Raising the per student rate will keep parents working and help children develop the academic and social skills needed to graduate, get good jobs and rise to their potential."

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About The New York State Network for Youth Success

The New York State Network for Youth Success is dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool and expanded learning programs. The Network for Youth Success supports all programs that promote young people's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development outside the traditional school day. These programs include those that serve youth in kindergarten through 12th grade, take place in schools and/or in community-based settings, and occur before and after school, during weekends, holidays, and summer breaks, or during the school day through partnerships with community organizations.

The Network for Youth Success convenes partners and coordinates them around a common agenda focused on partnership development, policy development, and capacity building. The network connects practice with policy across a broad range of state, regional, and local partners that represent the afterschool, expanded learning, community schools, and youth development fields broadly.

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