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April 27, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
New York State Governor  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your leadership to support New York's children and families during this COVID-19 pandemic. We are kindly requesting that you ask the Office of Children and Family Services to release guidance that would allow grantees of the Empire State After-School Program (ESAP) and the Advantage After School Program (AASP) to continue utilizing their afterschool contracts during this difficult time.

Many afterschool programs face a double crisis today due to COVID-19 and lack of guidance from the State to help keep them afloat. It has been several weeks since you announced New York on PAUSE, an important step in the fight against the pandemic which has disrupted the flow of services afterschool programs provide. Unfortunately, up until now, there has been no guidance from the State on use of funds for ESAP and AASP. Flexibility for programs is critical to keep afterschool staff employed and continue meeting the needs of the children and families these programs work with during these unprecedented times.

Afterschool providers receiving 21st CCLC funds and ESD/SVP funds have received guidance that provides the contractual flexibilities these programs need to continue providing essential services. As the two major state funding streams for afterschool, many Advantage and Empire State afterschool programs are firmly holding on, hoping that the State would provide similar contractual flexibilities to allow programs to retain high-quality staff and continue to provide the vital services that students and families need during this difficult time.

For many families, afterschool goes beyond after school. Today, programs are keeping kids safe and engaged in learning through virtual learning and enrichment opportunities; helping essential personnel continue to do their jobs by providing emergency childcare services; providing and delivering food and necessary supplies to families in need; and staying connected with caregivers and parents. Afterschool is an essential part of our communities' response to address the impact of COVID-19.

We hope that clarification and guidance will be provided immediately to ensure that afterschool programs with ESAP and AASP funds receive the much needed flexibility to continue the important work they do.

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Ellen C. Jaffee, Chair

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CC:

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Daniel Fuller  
Michael Mastroianni  
Sheila Poole  
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Robert Korycinski

ALBANY OFFICE: Room 626, Legislative Office Building, Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-5118, FAX:  
518-455-5119 DISTRICT OFFICE: One Blue Hill Plaza, Box 1549, Pearl River, New York 10965 • 845-624-4601,  
FAX: 845-624-2911 Email: [jaffee@nyassembly.gov](mailto:jaffee@nyassembly.gov)  
Website: [www.nyassembly.gov](http://www.nyassembly.gov)