2018 Budget Cut oped template

Imagine what would happen if, tomorrow, the afterschool programs that XX,XXX kids across STATE attend suddenly closed.

[As a parent, I shudder to think of the chaos that would ensue.] Thankfully, these programs are open, and kids across the state are getting help with their homework, building robots, making music, and exploring potential career paths. Their parents have peace of mind because they know their kids are safe, and engaged in fun learning activities. Kids are discovering what they love to do, and developing the skills they’ll need to land their first job.

But with Trump’s proposed federal budget released last week, all of that could disappear. The budget eliminates 21st Century Community Learning Centers, crucial federal funding that supports local afterschool and summer programs.

Nearly 2 million kids nationwide—including XXXXX in STATE—may be left with nowhere to go, and their parents will be left scrambling to balance family and work responsibilities.

President Trump is turning his back on hardworking families, and in the process dismissing decades of research that shows afterschool programs improve kids’ attendance and performance at school. [A study](https://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/performance.html) by the U.S. Department of Education found that 1 in 2 students who regularly attended a Community Learning Center afterschool program improved their math and reading grades. Two-thirds finished more of their homework and participated more in class. And nearly 65% improved behavior in class.

Our kids, families and businesses rely on afterschool programs—we simply cannot afford to close them.

Here in TOWN for instance, [insert a few sentences about a specific program and what it offers kids or a business with employees who have kids in afterschool or a working family who relies on 21st C.]

Afterschool programs like these are a lifeline for hardworking moms and dads in STATE. They help parents focus on providing for their families, rather than worrying about whether their child is supervised, or coordinating rides or someone to watch their kids. In fact, XX percent of parents statewide support public funding for afterschool. The vast majority – XX percent – say afterschool programs help them keep their jobs and give them peace of mind. But if kids have no place to go afterschool, parents miss up to eight unscheduled days of work annually, costing businesses up to $300 billion.

Businesses across the state want to hire problem solvers and team players, and they need employees with technical skills. Afterschool programs help students learn by doing, and develop the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

But most importantly, what would happen to our kids now if this funding is eliminated? We know that afterschool programs help kids avoid risky behaviors, online and offline, between 3 and 6pm, when juvenile crime and victimization peak. We already have XX,XXX kids in STATE alone and unsupervised after school. That number would skyrocket if we don’t stop the president from eliminating federal funding.

We’ve fought this fight before. Last year, the President’s budget zeroed out funding for afterschool. Congress had the wisdom to listen to STATE’s families and community leaders, and kept afterschool programs alive.

Congress should listen to parents in STATE again and reject the proposed cuts to afterschool funding. XX,XXXX children are counting on it.