

Connecticut After School Network

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 7241 AN ACT CONCERNING AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM GRANTS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Education Committee Public Hearing, February 28, 2007
Michelle Doucette Cunningham, Connecticut After School Network

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Education Committee. My name is Michelle Doucette Cunningham, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network, a state-wide organization that works to ensure that children and youth have safe, supervised activities available during their out-of-school hours. We are a large diverse group of more than one thousand private and non-profit providers, city officials, school districts, state agencies, businesses, parents, faith-based and community-based organizations.

I am here today, on behalf of the After School Network, to testify in support of HB 7241, "An Act Concerning After School Program Grants and Parent Involvement."

The inclusion of a parent involvement component in the after school grants administered by the State Department of Education both strengthens the quality of these programs while at the same time makes them more consistent with other initiatives such as the 21st Century Community Learning Center federal grants administered by the Department of Education.

Similar to research on parent and family involvement in schools, research provides evidence that parent and family involvement in after-school programs increases students' achievement and success. Here are just a few of the research findings that link parent involvement to a child's success in- and out-of-school.

- Children achieve more when their parents are involved. This is regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic background, or parents' education level.
- Children exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior when their parents are involved.
- Children have higher graduation rates and greater enrollment rates in postsecondary education when parents are involved in their lives.
- Youth risk behaviors, such as alcohol use, violence, and antisocial behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

After school programs 1) keep kids safe, 2) help working families, and 3) improve academic achievement. Adding a parental involvement component to these programs makes it more likely that these programs will meet the needs of the children and families they serve, and be more successful in the long term. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this very important grant program.

Making the Connections for After School

The Network operates in partnership with CSACA - Connecticut's after school professional organization.