

From: **National Summer Learning Association**

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National Summer Learning Association Raises Awareness about the Importance of Summer Learning at the Organization’s Hill Day on June 28

The event brought together students, families, summer opportunity organizers and congressional representatives to discuss how we can better engage children during the summer

Baltimore, MD – June 29 – Leaders of youth-serving organizations from across the country convened yesterday under the umbrella of the [National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#) for a Summer Learning Advocates Hill Day in Washington, DC. With federal budget cuts looming for summer and afterschool programs, NSLA brought together members from its network of youth advocates for the event to raise awareness of the importance of summer learning experiences, advocate for greater resources for local summer programming, and to foster greater communication between Congress and local summer learning representatives.

Research shows that summers without quality learning opportunities hold our nation’s youth back – year after year – in core subjects like math and reading, and in life experiences like college and career exposure. In fact, the math and reading skills that low-income students lose each summer are cumulative and contribute significantly to the achievement gap between lower - and higher - income students. Yet the demand for these programs far outweighs the supply. For every child enrolled in a summer program, another is waiting to get in. And the high average cost of summer programs (\$288 per child per week) puts many options out of reach for many working families. (See *Summer by the Numbers* Infographic [here.](#))

“Summer learning is a well-documented solution to supporting the academic and social growth of all students, yet, it remains an under-resourced strategy for closing the achievement gap in our country,” said Matthew Boulay, Ph.D., NSLA founder and CEO. “Communities that invest in keeping all young people learning, safe and healthy during the critical summer months reap measurable rewards in stronger schools, safer neighborhoods, and a better-prepared workforce. NSLA organized Hill Day to urge Congress to fully invest in these critical programs that have enduring impact at the local level.”

Given the current political and budgetary climate, summer learning organizers and advocates attended today's Hill Day with three key policy issues in mind to urge their representatives in Washington to consider:

- **Support full funding (\$1.3 billion) for the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) program** in the FY 2018 budget. The 21CCLC program is the only federal program dedicated to supporting summer and after-school learning and enrichment programs, and this funding supports expansion of services and improved quality at the local level.
- **Support reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Programs, which includes the Summer Food Service Program** that provides subsidized meals to youth who also receive free and reduced meals during the school year. Summer meals are most effective when delivered through the congregate feeding model, which brings youth to a central location for meals (such as schools, libraries, and rec centers). During this time, youth can also engage in learning and enrichment activities with schools and community partners, providing a greater return on both investments.
- **Support full funding (\$1.6 billion) for the ESSA Title IV Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program.** Created by Congress, the SSAE grant program encompasses a broad set of effective programs and interventions, each of which has been demonstrated to positively impact student well-being and academic performance and achievement, and which can take place in or out of school. These programs include: mental health services to students, violence prevention; increased student access to STEM courses, physical education and college and career counseling; technology professional development opportunities for educators. The FY 2017 allocation of only \$400 million is wholly inadequate to provide the flexibility at the local level or to run the program as Congress intended.

The benefits of engaging children in summer learning opportunities are profound according to Matthew Boulay, Ph.D., NSLA founder and CEO. He pointed to a recent RAND Corporation/Wallace Foundation [study](#), the largest-ever study of summer learning, which showed that students with high attendance in free, five to six-week, voluntary summer learning programs experienced educationally meaningful benefits in math and reading. This evidence, among other findings, help support national advocacy efforts to protect critical federal funding streams for summer and afterschool programs.

According to Rachel Gwaltney, Director of Policy and Partnerships at the National Summer Learning Association, congressional staff from offices on both sides of the aisle reaffirmed the value of summer and afterschool programs and said that they would work to restore Trump's budget cuts to 21st CCLC program. She also noted that summer learning advocates around the country made their voices heard yesterday, sending over 1100 messages to 434 Congressional offices [asking them to preserve funding for the 21 CCLC program](#).

"Public-private partnerships are critical to BELL's ability to achieve its mission. NSLA's Hill Day represents a valuable and timely opportunity to build awareness about the power of summer

learning and the measurable impact of BELL's programs and partnerships," said Dr. Lauren Gilbert, President and Chief Strategy Officer, and CEO elect, at BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life).

NSLA's Hill Day is an event in the lead up to July 13, **National Summer Learning Day** – an advocacy day aimed at elevating the importance of keeping all kids learning, safe and healthy during the summer. Led by the NSLA, National Summer Learning Day unites the country in advocacy efforts and celebrations hosted by hundreds of partner organizations from libraries to parks and recreation centers and civic and non-profit groups that intend to double last year's goal and reach two million youth served. NSLA's *Smarter Summers, Brighter Futures* [website](#) supports promotion of National Summer Learning Day with an events calendar, summer meals locator, and user-friendly resources for families, summer programs providers, and municipal leaders – all to help keep kids healthy and engaged during the summer break.

About the National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in summer learning, develops and delivers community capacity-building offerings and convenes and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org