

CASTLE EXAMINES AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS AT HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING -- MARCH 11, 2008

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Stresses academic quality of State 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs

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Washington, DC -- Today the House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, held a hearing on "After School Programs: How the Bush Administration's Budget Impacts Children and Families" exploring 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) after school programs. At the hearing, Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), Senior Republican of the Subcommittee raised the issue of academic quality of current CCLC programs. Rep. Castle also took the opportunity to highlight changes made to the program since the implementation of No Child Left Behind, as well as the benefits of CCLC after school programs.

"It is clear that in Delaware and throughout the United States, CCLC after school programs are important in giving school-aged children the opportunity to grow," said Congressman Castle. "Although I believe strongly in the principles of this program, it is important that federal funding for 21st CCLC programs is used as it is intended - to provide meaningful educational opportunities for school-aged children.

"I was pleased to have the opportunity hear from our panel of expert witnesses their suggestions on how to strengthen the academic component of 21st CCLC programs as well as have the opportunity to learn more about what CCLC programs in different states are doing to make a difference in the lives of young children."

In her testimony, Theresa Kough, the Delaware Department of Education's After School Program Coordinator stated, "The Delaware Department of Education works with its 21st CCLC centers to ensure that center personnel are addressing its program goals of improving students' performance on statewide assessments and offering services designed to reinforce and complement traditional academic programs."

Ms. Kough also highlighted the rigorous standards the Delaware Department of Education has for programs wishing to apply to receive funding through the CCLC program.

The 21st Century Community Learning Center Program is a Department of Education grant program that supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The Delaware Department of Education's CCLC program currently runs 25 programs in 55 sites throughout the state.

CCLC programs take place after school, during the time when youth crime is most likely to occur. Along with its academic

component, CCLC programs help reduce youth crime in the areas where programs are located. In addition to overseeing today's hearing, Rep. Castle also co-hosted a youth crime prevention forum, entitled "Youth Violence and Intervention Strategies: Advancing Effective Crime Policy for 2008", where Rep. Castle stressed the importance of engaging youth in a positive way through after school programs to deter their involvement in gangs or other dangerous activities. At this forum, Congressman Castle also heard testimony from a panel of experts who reviewed intervention policies that work effectively to reduce youth crime.

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