

Legislative Budget and Finance Committee
Afterschool Programs in Pennsylvania
Report Presentation by Philip Durgin,
Executive Director, at June 15, 2016, Meeting

Good morning. Last December, the Committee officers directed us to conduct a follow-up to our May 2009 report on the availability and affordability of after-school programs across the Commonwealth.

In the seven years since our last report, we found that new legislation has been enacted, both nationally and in various states, to expand the concept of after-school programs, which are now often referred to as Out-of-School Time programs. For example, at the federal level, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act, provides for Expanded Learning Time, in which schools can receive federal funds for establishing a longer school day, or a longer school year, if that extra time is used for student enrichment programs. Although to date, few Pennsylvania schools have chosen to implement expanded learning time schedules, other states, such as California, Texas, and Vermont, have taken steps to encourage and support expanded learning time efforts within their school systems.

We also found that afterschool programs are placing increased emphasis on developing their programs by engaging in activities such as continuous quality

improvement, enrichment programs such as for music and art, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programming. For example we found that over two-thirds of the 502 afterschool programs that responded to our survey offer some type of STEM program. One notable example is SHINE, an afterschool program serving Carbon and Schuylkill Counties, which has frequently been cited as a national model for its afterschool STEM program.

While over 120 federal programs can provide at least some level of funding for afterschool and summer programs, much of the funding for afterschool programs is provided by Child Care Works, Pennsylvania's subsidized child care program. These funds, however, are only available for children age 12 and under from low-income families. Other major sources of federal funding for afterschool programs come from Title 1, which are federal funds for schools with high percentages of low-income families, and the 21st Century Community of Learning Center program, which also targets schools that serve a high percentage of low-income students and is the only federal funding source specifically devoted to afterschool programs.

Pennsylvania received \$42.6 million in federal 21st Century CLC funding in 2015 and is scheduled to receive \$42.3 million in 2016. While obviously a significant amount of money, the funding has remained essentially flat since 2008, when Pennsylvania received \$42.4 million in 21st Century CLC funding. In the budget currently before Congress, Pennsylvania's share of 21st Century CLC funding would

be reduced to \$36.2 million, but afterschool advocates at the national level are working hard to increase overall funding to at least 2016 levels.

While afterschool programs may be provided for free or at a low-cost to many low-income families, most afterschool programs depend on parent fees to provide 50 percent or more of their funding, with costs to parents often exceeding \$100 per week.

As part of our questionnaire process, we asked the aftercare providers to identify the top challenges they face in running their programs. The number one challenge, cited by 72 percent of the afterschool providers, was staff recruitment and retention. Low wages and the part-time nature of many of the jobs were the two key factors cited as affecting recruitment and retention. Finding sustainable funding was the second most frequently cited challenge.

We also sent questionnaires to school districts, and over one-third of the 93 school districts responding reported that more afterschool programs are needed. This varied somewhat by the age of the student, with the greatest need being for afterschool programs for middle school students (grades 6-8). Forty-three percent of responding school districts reported that the need for afterschool programming is not being met for this age group, with an additional 26 percent responding that they “did not know” whether the need was being met for this age group.

Finally, we found that about 20 states (Pennsylvania is not among them) have budgeted at least some state funding for afterschool programs. California, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah are among the states that dedicate \$5 million or more in state or state-related funds to support their afterschool and summer learning programs.

Our 2009 report recommended a Statewide Afterschool Coordinating Council be created to help identify and develop stable sources of funding and to assess both the need for, and the barriers to, developing more quality afterschool programs. Such a body, however, was never created. For this report, we scaled the recommendation down and recommend a less formal “working group” be created to be comprised of representatives from key Departments, such as Education, Human Services, and Labor and Industry, and key stakeholders from the afterschool advocate and provider community as well as interested members of the General Assembly. The Department of Education is the most appropriate entity to take the lead in organizing this work group. Topics and areas we recommend the working group pursue include:

- identifying stable sources of funding,
- identifying strategies for finding and retaining afterschool program staff,
- establishing and maintaining quality program standards,

- promoting regional databases of afterschool programs to facilitate parents finding programs, and
- identifying steps to foster further collaboration and partnerships between afterschool providers and schools, businesses, and other untapped community groups.

Before closing, we'd like to thank the many afterschool providers, school districts, and county Children and Youth agencies for completing our questionnaires and to the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network for the excellent assistance and cooperation they provided during this study.