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STATE AND NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS URGE INVESTMENT IN HIGH-QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS TO REDUCE CRIME AND BOOST PUBLIC SAFETY IN MISSISSIPPI AND BEYOND

WASHINGTON, DC - The hours immediately following the end of the school day are the "**prime time for juvenile crime**," when young people are likeliest to be involved in criminal activity—which is why investing in high-quality afterschool programs is crucially important for putting kids on the right track for success in life.

That's the top-line message from a new report, entitled **"From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks**," released today by the nonpartisan law-enforcement organization **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids**, a membership group comprised of more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors across the country, advocating for evidence-based solutions that improve the lives of kids while reducing crime and making our communities safer.

The new Fight Crime: Invest in Kids report spotlights research showing the impact of afterschool programs on improving public safety through reduced crime, increasing student academic performance, and saving taxpayer dollars, among other positive outcomes.

The report details an analysis of FBI and local law enforcement data on school-day crime rates for youth in 46 states. The analysis found that a majority of states for which data was available saw juvenile crime spike during the afterschool hours from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

In **Mississippi**, juvenile crime peaks from 2 to 6 p.m. on school days, with about 21 percent of all juvenile crime on those days occurring during the hours following the last school bell.

Mississippi's kids are among the more than **11 million children** nationwide who still find themselves in an environment devoid of adult supervision during the afterschool hours. In all, **17 percent** of children in Mississippi are unsupervised after school.

The encouraging news is that the research contained in the report makes a striking and compelling case for the positive impact of high-quality afterschool programs, which can provide a range of benefits to participating young people, including homework help, mentors, healthy snacks and meals, computer programming, opportunities to think critically, collaborate, and communicate with peers and adults, job and college readiness, sports and fitness activities, robotics, art, dance, and music, and opportunities for hands-on, team-based learning.

Data supports the effectiveness of high-quality afterschool programs. Examples include an examination of a program in Texas offered through 21st Century Learning Centers (CCLC) funding—the only federal funding source for programs that serve high-poverty schools, and enabling communities to create and shape afterschool programs uniquely suited to their kids. The Texas program showed improved standardized test scores and reduced absenteeism among participating students.

These findings are consistent with an analysis of dozens of 21st CCLC afterschool programs across the country. This analysis of 68 different programs found that participants scored better on state math and reading achievement tests, earned better grades, and had better school-day attendance.

High-quality afterschool programs' positive effects on academic performance are of particular importance to law-enforcement leaders, since 6 of 10 inmates in the United States lack a high-school diploma.

But the benefits of high-quality afterschool programs even go beyond in-school performance. Research on other programs found participants were less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and less likely to become involved in crime.

On top of that, the report highlights research showing that every dollar invested in high-quality afterschool programs can save at least $3 in return. This savings comes from the increased earning potential, reduced future dependence on welfare, increased academic performance, and reduced involvement in crime of kids who participate in these programs.

Today's report release helps set the stage for the national "Lights On Afterschool" celebration that will take place on October 24th. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, more than a million people across the country will take part in over 8,000 Lights On Afterschool events. The Afterschool Alliance organizes Lights On Afterschool to underscore the need to invest in afterschool programs.

"This vitally important new report is a powerful endorsement of afterschool programs from the law enforcement community. Law enforcement leaders from coast to coast recognize that investing in afterschool programs today is essential to our safety and security tomorrow," said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance.

"This new report shows conclusively that the hours between 2 and 6 PM, when schools are closed but many parents are still on the job, are prime time for juvenile crime. So, if we are serious about reducing juvenile crime, victimization and delinquency, keeping our streets and communities safe, and putting youth on the path to becoming responsible, successful adults, we will increase funding for afterschool programs. Every student needs the chance to learn and grow, in a safe, supervised environment, after the school day ends."

That call for investment is a more pressing concern today: Although funding for afterschool programs has increased since 2000, the current administration has recommended entirely eliminating funding for 21st Century Learning Centers.

Slashing funding would be counterintuitive not only to the research case for high-quality afterschool programs, but also to the strong recommendation of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' law-enforcement leaders.

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