**Student 1**

Thank you, Congressman Cleaver, for taking the time to meet with us. I am Stella Linn and we are members of the Social Justice Club of Pembroke Hill. Our club is a group of 7th grade students that meet every other week to talk about social issues affecting our community and to learn how we can help.

Today we would like to thank you for helping keep the funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, which is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to supporting local afterschool programs. We would also like to share with you why we think these programs should be protected.

First, however, let’s go around and introduce ourselves.

**\*go around saying names\***

Student 2 will start explaining what our Social Justice Club is and how we have benefited from this particular after school program.

**Student 2**

In our club we believe that a just society is the one that helps all its members achieve their full potential. We can only reach our full potential, however, if we cooperate with and care for each other. No one can be their best alone. That’s why in the past two years, we have studied about some of the issues that affect the well-being of our communities and have taken some actions on these issues.

We learned, among other things, about the plight of refugees around the world, and about poverty and unequal access to health care in Kansas City. As a result, we held a picnic and a carnival for refugee children and served them food, played games and soccer. We held a bake sale where we donated around $300-$500 to the World Vision Organization. We also had a toy drive and a backpack drive.

Currently, we are leading a social justice club for 3rd grade children, where we are teaching them about the importance of having courage, overcoming stereotypes, having social responsibility and caring for the environment. This can have a positive impact on the future generation, as they learn what social justice looks like and how it can be achieved.

Student 1

Thank you, ------, for sharing about our club. Now we will have Grace talk a little about why we chose to advocate for after school programs.

**Student 3**

Congressman Cleaver, as members of the social justice club we chose to advocate for after school programs after watching the PBS documentary “Our Divided City”. In this documentary we saw the violence and fear that people who live very close to us have to face on a daily basis. We wanted to help youth in our community thrive in a safe and caring environment and reach their full potential. We found out that investing in after school programs is a way of moving us closer to this goal.

Currently, through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the federal government provides grants to local communities for afterschool programs. We were pleased to see that the recent fiscal year 2018 budget included an additional $20 million for 21st Century Learning Centers. According to the Afterschool Alliance, this means that 20,000 additional students will gain access to afterschool programs. However, that also means that there are still over 19 million kids who still cannot participate.

*Student 1*

Thank you! Now we will have ----- speak about the benefits of after school programs.

**Student 4**

I would like to share with you the multiple positive results that come out of an afterschool program. During an afterschool program, kids can engage in STEM, art, music, physical activity and career and technical programs. An afterschool program also provides a safe place for kids, and steers them away from unsafe situations, that may be taking place in their community, since most criminal activity takes place from 3-7 p.m. 73% of parents and 83% of participants felt like these programs helped keep the kids out of drugs, gangs, or other criminal activity. After school programs can reduce the risk of a child doing drugs by 60%, which is huge.

These programs also increase the chance of a child moving to the next grade by 43%. Students participating in a high-quality afterschool program had higher attendance, behaved better, had better grades and did better on tests compared to non-participating students. Overall, it is proven that kids who have attended afterschool programs have felt more confident in school, and have better work ethics.

When I was in preschool, I didn’t know any English, I only spoke my native language which was Hindi. I stayed after school everyday for an hour to work on my English, and by the next year, I could fluently speak English. I could not have done that without a program after school to help me.

*Student 1*

Thank you, -----. Now ---- and ----- will be sharing some personal experience and telling us who are the people who benefit from this program the most.

**Student 5**

Congressman Cleaver, are you aware that almost 2 million children (just like my friends and I,) across the nation benefit from federally funded after school programs? 68% of the children placed in these programs qualify for free or reduced price lunches that they can’t afford. Roughly 1.8 million kids get help with homework and academics during the time they spend within these programs.

At one point I was one of these kids… From 1st to 3rd grade (when I attended public school), I was one of the many children who needed a place to go after school. Coming from a single parent home I can say that this program really helped my mom out… Everyday after school I was provided with a healthy snack and a quiet place to do my homework. In this environment I was able to strive as a student and go beyond the expectations for my school work.

Along with academics, 20% of the children in these programs start school barely knowing English. They eventually leave knowing more of the language then when they walked in because of the ESL services provided to them.

Currently more than 15 million School aged children are on their own after school. If the after school and extracurricular classes were taken away 15 million would rise to 17 putting millions more of kids at risk. Sadly, President Trump has proposed in his fiscal year 2019 budget that the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program be eliminated.

**Student 6**

Participation in afterschool programs has consistently increased over the past 10 years, rising to nearly 2 million children in the last five years alone.

However, the number of children unsupervised in the hours after school, while on the decline, remains high. The demand for afterschool programs is much higher in communities of concentrated poverty than the national average, where more than half of children (56 percent) not in an afterschool program would be enrolled in one if it were available to them, compared to the national average of 41 percent.

As the economy continues to recover, afterschool programs are an essential source of support for working parents—giving them peace of mind when at work and helping them to keep their jobs. More than 8 in 10 parents (83 percent) of children in afterschool programs agree that afterschool programs help working parents keep their jobs.

More than 9 in 10 parents who identify as Democrats (91 percent), 86 percent of parents who self-identify as Independents and 80 percent of parents identifying as Republicans report that they favor public funding for afterschool programs.

*Student 1*

Thank you, ----- and ------.

**Student 7**

Congressman Cleaver, we would like to thank you again for your support to federally funded after school programs and ask you to continue supporting them in the future. As you can see, these programs help reduce social inequalities and contribute to a more just society.

Specifically, would you speak with House appropriators and urge them to continue their investment in America’s children by increasing the current funding of $1.21 billion for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers so more of the 19 million kids waiting for access get the chance to participate?

**Student 8**

Congressman Cleaver, as our club moves forward with its activities, we would like to ask you a few questions to help us in our efforts to be a positive force in our community:

Which type of policies or collective actions you think would help reduce social inequalities in Kansas City?

Do you have any suggestions for our social justice club in terms of activities that we kids could do to help build a more just community?

**Student 9**

As you know, Congressman Cleaver, there has been a lot of attention given to the voices of young people over the last few weeks. Considering many of these students cannot vote yet, what kind of weight do members of Congress give to their opinions?

In your opinion, what are the most effective strategies young people can use to create positive change?

**Student 10**

Congressman Cleaver, can you share with us what inspired you to be a public servant?

What do you like most about your job?