

July 2, 2010

Dear Friend,

As you are aware, we have recently experienced a surge of violence among the youth in our community. These developments and the challenges imposed by the economic recession give increasing importance to the role of afterschool programs in our community.

Afterschool programs have long been a safe haven and educational resource for the youth in our community; a place where they can build on their skills, explore talents, participate in community service and most of all develop tools to help them interact with their peers. However, afterschool programming is not available to all students and those that are available often lack community and financial support.

To strengthen afterschool programs, I sponsored Senate Bill 3543, a new law that creates the Illinois Youth Development Project to coordinate and strengthen afterschool services throughout the state. It also establishes a demonstration program, which will evaluate best practices, outcomes and costs of quality afterschool programs while strengthening existing programs. Private dollars are currently being raised through foundations to be added to the “after school funding pot.” However, additional state funding will also be sought to assist programs that excel.

To further explore this idea, I would like to invite you to attend *Community, Family & Future: A Panel Discussion of Afterschool Programs* on July 19 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Peoria Public Library, Lakeview Branch, at 1137 W. Lake Ave. The forum will include a discussion led by statewide afterschool advocates, including Dr. Christopher Koch, Illinois State Superintendent of Schools; Kathy Ryg, President of Voices for Illinois Children; and Karrie Rueter, Illinois Department of Human Services. Local program and service providers and concerned constituents are all welcome to attend and ask questions and share your thoughts about the Youth Development Project and what afterschool programs mean to our community.

For more information, please contact my constituent service office at (309) 681-1992. I look forward to your participation in this very important discussion.

Sincerely,

Jehan Gordon
State Representative