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National Center for Summer Learning

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National Center for Summer Learning Summer Learning Policy Recommendations

Background

Extensive research shows that lack of access to high-quality summer learning programs can negatively impact academic achievement, increase childhood obesity, and hinder social development. In fact, a recent longitudinal study from Johns Hopkins University shows that two-thirds of the achievement gap in reading can be attributed solely to unequal summer learning opportunities. This same study also shows that summer learning loss causes lower-income youth to fall more than two and one-half years behind their more affluent peers by the end of fifth grade, directly contributing to higher drop-out rates. We know that summer is a time when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Despite this expansive body of research, there are currently no federal programs that explicitly target the summer months as a strategy to increase academic achievement and support healthy development for disadvantaged youth. Equally troubling, summer programs are often the first to be eliminated during difficult economic times as seen this past summer in California and Florida.

Policy Recommendations

The Center is deeply appreciative of President-elect Obama's support of summer learning programs, both on the campaign trail and in the Senate. Building on this record of support, we urge that summer learning programs such as the STEP UP Act (authorized, but not funded as part of the America COMPETES Act, P.L. 110-69), be funded and implemented immediately. As a result, we respectfully ask that you consider including \$50 million in funding for summer learning opportunities as part of the economic recovery package and/or the FY2010 budget request.

Funding of summer learning programs such as STEP UP will provide:

- ⇒ Critical financial support to struggling school districts and community-based organizations offering summer learning opportunities to children in high-poverty communities;
- ⇒ High-quality summer learning opportunities for over 30,000 children (as provided in the STEP UP Act) to help close the achievement gap and foster 21st Century skills such as creativity and innovation;
- ⇒ Employment opportunities for approximately 2,000 teachers and other individuals working in summer programs (as provided in the STEP UP Act);
- ⇒ Support for parents struggling to pay bills and unable to afford fee-based summer programs for their kids;
- ⇒ Partnerships between schools and community-based organizations to provide seamless, year-round services to complement afterschool and extended learning day service providers.

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