



# Advocacy for Out-of-School Time: Toolkit

*Updated as of 2/7/2024*

## **Introduction**

Out-of-school time (OST) programs in Massachusetts play a critical role in supporting children, youth, and families. Everyone has a role in ensuring kids have access to high-quality, affordable afterschool and summer enrichment programs – one of the most effective ways to support these programs is through advocacy and public education.

Advocacy for Out-of-School Time (OST) is the act of calling for support, raising awareness, expanding resources, and increasing access for high-quality, affordable OST programs for all children and youth. Advocacy can mean calling or emailing your legislators, coalition-building among your OST colleagues and other stakeholders or speaking on afterschool during public hearings and/or advocacy events.

*Why contact your local and state policymakers?*

By building rapport with your local and state policymakers, you help educate them about the need for and impact of OST and have the opportunity to develop new champions for OST who can help advocate for resources and establish beneficial policies. Some potential policymakers to consider include: state legislators and their staff, mayors, city council members, superintendents, principals, school board members, law enforcement officials, chamber of commerce members, business leaders, and more!

## **Background**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government disbursed relief funds – otherwise known as Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) – to assist school districts to continue safe operations and meet the socioemotional needs of students. **Much of the ESSER funding was invested into afterschool and summer learning programs.** With **ESSER funding soon to run out**, afterschool providers are at the risk of reducing services and leaving thousands

of children, youth, and families without the critical support they need. **With adequate state support, we can continue to reach thousands of children and families through afterschool and summer learning programs.**

As Massachusetts continues to address the [migrant crisis across many municipalities](#), afterschool programs are in a unique position to respond. Afterschool programs can support migrant families as they cope with the barriers that come with resettlement.

### **Important Afterschool Line Items in the FY25 Budget**

These line items support enhancement and expansion of access to afterschool and summer learning programs by public schools, nonpublic schools, and private community-based organizations.

- **7061-9611 (Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Grant): \$10.9 million**
- **7061-9814 (Summer Learning Grants): \$3 million**

Reach out to your legislator(s) and **encourage them to level fund 7061-9611 at \$10.9 million and 7061-9814 at \$3 million for FY25.**

## **Action Steps**

*There are many ways to connect with your legislators to share the importance of Out-of-School Time. You can select one and/or do as many of the action steps as you'd like listed below.*

Find your legislator: [Find My Legislator \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov)

1. **Send a letter or email your legislators** (templates below).
2. **Call your legislators** (scripts below).
3. **Set up a site visit with your legislators.**
4. **Join the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership on our Advocacy Day at the Massachusetts State House** (coming soon!).

### **1. Send a letter or email your legislators.**

#### **Sample Email/Letter Script:**

*Send your legislator an email (or letter if you like to do it the old fashioned way) letter to share your story in the Out-of-School Time field and urge them to support budget line item 7061-9611 and 7061-9814 in the FY25 budget. You can use the sample email below:*

*If you are an Afterschool and/or Out-of-School Time provider:*

[Senator/Representative First Name Last Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Or [Subject Line] if an email: Support the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) and Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814)

Dear [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_]

I'm writing to urge you to level fund the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and the Summer Learning Grants at \$3 million in the FY25 budget. Afterschool programs are the anchor for working families across Massachusetts - any reduction in funding could reduce access to these critical programs.

Afterschool programs across Massachusetts support our children, youth, and families in need. From academic support to career exploration and life skill development, programs help our kids become better prepared for their futures. Evidence-based research shows that participation in high-quality afterschool improves student reading comprehension, math achievement, school-day attendance, and overall academic performance.

Prioritizing funding for afterschool programs is not only an investment in the overall well-being of our youth but also a commitment to supporting all our working families as well. Afterschool programs help parents stay at work from the hours of three to six p.m., all while knowing their children have a safe place to be.

**Program specific:** *Use this paragraph as an opportunity to include more information about your program specifically! If you need assistance drafting a quick paragraph, please email [chloe@massafterschool.org](mailto:chloe@massafterschool.org).* At [your program name] in [town], our afterschool educators serve [number of students] students ages \_\_\_\_\_. We provide access to [types of programming (STEM, arts, etc.)] and have built strong relationships with the parents in our community. Our program and other programs like ours relies on funding from the ASOST grant (7061-9611) and the Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814).

Your support will undoubtedly have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of thousands of youth and their families.

Again, I'd like to encourage you to level fund the ASOST line item (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and Summer Learning Grants at \$3 million in the FY25 budget. Thank you for your dedication to our community, and I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Best regards,

[First name Last name, Position]

[Organization]

[Address]

*If you are a Constituent:*

[Senator/Representative First Name Last Name]

[Address]

[Date]

Or [Subject Line] if an email: Support the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) and Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814)

Dear [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_]

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a constituent of yours living at \_\_\_\_\_. I currently work as the [job title] at [organization] in [town].

I'm writing today to urge you to level fund the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and the Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814) at \$3 million in the FY25 budget. Afterschool programs are the anchor for so many working families across Massachusetts - any reduction in funding could reduce access to these critical programs.

I want to emphasize how afterschool programs particularly support migrant families and English language learners. These programs serve as a crucial resource for these families, offering a supportive space for children to enhance their language skills, receive homework assistance, and participate in activities that foster inclusion and community integration.

Prioritizing funding for afterschool programs is not only an investment in the overall well-being of our youth but also a commitment to supporting the diverse needs of migrant families and EL students.

Your support will undoubtedly have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of thousands of youth and their families.

Again, I'd like to encourage you to level fund the ASOST line item (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and the Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814) at \$3 million in the FY25 budget. Thank you for your dedication to our community, and I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Best regards,

[First name Last name, Position]

[Organization]

[Address]

## **2. Call your Legislators.**

### **Sample Phone Script**

Call your legislator to share your story in the Out-of-School Time field and urge them to support budget line item 7061-9611 in the FY25 budget. You can use the sample phone script below:

*If you are an Afterschool and/or Out-of-School Time provider:*

Hello [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_]

My name is [your name] and I am a [your position] at [your program name] in [town/city]. I am calling to ask you to level the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and the Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814) at \$3 million in the FY25 budget. [Name of afterschool program] plays a critical role in the lives of children and youth, especially those from working families. Our programs provide a safe and supportive environment filled with enrichment and learning opportunities for kids, while also giving their parents peace of mind. Prioritizing funding for afterschool programs is an investment in the well-being of our children and youth and a commitment to supporting our communities.

Your support will undoubtedly have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of thousands of youths and their families across Massachusetts. Thank you for your dedication to our community, and I appreciate your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions for me, you can reach me at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or at my email address \_\_\_\_\_.

*If you are a Constituent:*

Hello [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_]

My name is [your name] and I am a [constituent] living in [town/city]. I currently am a [your role] at [your program]. I am calling to ask you to level the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant (7061-9611) at \$10.9 million and the Summer Learning Grants (7061-9814) at \$3 million in the FY25 budget.

Afterschool programs are the anchor for so many working families across Massachusetts - any reduction in funding could reduce access to these critical programs.

Afterschool programs serve as a crucial resource for migrant families and English language learners, offering a supportive space for children to enhance their language skills, receive homework assistance, and participate in activities that foster inclusion and community integration.

Prioritizing funding for afterschool programs is not only an investment in the overall well-being of our youth but also a commitment to supporting the diverse needs of migrant families and EL students.

Your support will undoubtedly have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of thousands of youth and their families. If you have any questions for me, you can reach me at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or at my email address \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your dedication to our community, and I appreciate your attention to this important matter.

### **3. Set Up a Site Visit with Your Legislators.**

A site visit is a powerful strategy to show to your legislators the impact behind your afterschool program in real time. Legislators get the opportunity to meet with you, your staff, and the constituents in your afterschool program and vice versa.

You can schedule a site visit by connecting to your legislator's office via call or email. If you need more help, feel free to contact Chloe McElligott ([chloe@massafterschool.org](mailto:chloe@massafterschool.org)) or Patrick Stanton ([pstanton@massafterschool.org](mailto:pstanton@massafterschool.org)) to help facilitate this process.

### **Call Script Template**

Hello [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_]

I hope you are doing well today. My name is [your name] and I am a [your position] at [your program name] in [town/city]. We serve students ages x-x and offer [type of programming]. I would love to invite you and/or your staff to come visit [your program name] and join us in

[program event?] so you can see all the wonderful work we are doing to support school-age children learn and grow. My team was thinking that a visit on [date and time] could work.

(If voice mail, leave the Representative/Senator with your name, number, and email address so they can contact you!).

## Email Template

Dear [Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_],

My name is [your name] and I am a [your position] at [your program name] in [town/city]. We would love to invite you and/or your staff to come visit [your program name] and join us in [program event?] so you can see all the work we do to support school-age children learn and grow. My team would like to suggest [date and time] for a site visit so you would be able to see our program in action! Please feel free to email me back here or call me at (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Thank you for your time,

[Name]

## What Do You Talk About During a Site Visit?

After your legislator (or the legislator's staff) confirms a site visit, there might wonder what to say. Here are some tips to get you started!

- 1. Describe your OST program and its impact on your community.**
  - a. How do children and families benefit; what services do you provide?; partnerships with local community-based organizations
- 2. Sharing your personal perspective.**
  - a. Activities, skills, services that the children and youth are receiving from your program.
  - b. Observations from your OST program; what are the any personal testimonies from children, youth, and/or parents that you've heard?
  - c. Share outcomes and goals of your program.
  - d. Barriers that prevent children, youth, and families from accessing your program?

**3. Funding.**

- a. How is your program currently funded? Local, state, federal dollars?
- b. How has funding shifted over time? Has it improved? Has it suffered?

**4. TAKE ACTION: Advocacy Day with the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP)!**

Soon, the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP) will be holding an Advocacy Day at the Massachusetts State House. This is an opportunity for afterschool and out-of-school time providers, professionals, and other staff to gather at the state house to speak to legislators on the importance of afterschool.

Stay tuned for updates!