

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30) joined many of his colleagues in the House of Representatives today in voting for the Elementary and Secondary Education Authorization Act (H.R.1). The comprehensive education bill passed the House by a vote of 381-41.

"This legislation targets federal dollars better than ever before on students who need it the most," Becerra said. "I am particularly pleased to see the expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers After-School Program." A Clinton Administration initiative created to address the lack of after-school programs, previously 21st Century Community Learning Centers were restricted to schools.

Earlier this year, Rep. Becerra introduced H.R. 323, the Reading Enrichment After-School Development Act, or the READ Act, to extend the eligibility for 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding to libraries. "The legislation we passed today implements my idea, and goes one step further," continued Becerra. "Each weekday afternoon, at least eight million children across the nation are left alone and unsupervised. Broadening eligibility for these after-school programs to community based organizations, and other public and private entities like libraries makes a lot of sense."

H.R. 1 also increases next year's funding levels for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers by 48 percent. President Bush is expected to sign the bill into law before Christmas.