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Student programs face cuts: Budget could end after-school care

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Trump budget makes deep cuts

President Donald Trump's budget blueprint for the 2018 fiscal year boosts spending for defense, veterans and homeland security, with cuts to most other departments.

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At least 6,000 Hawaii students — including more than 1,000 on the Big Island — could be without after-school care if President Donald Trump's proposed 2018 fiscal budget were to take effect as is.

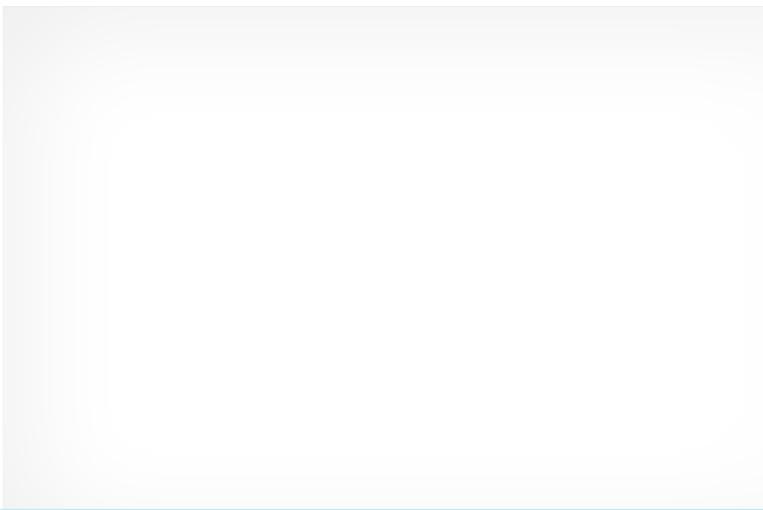
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At least 6,000 Hawaii students — including more than 1,000 on the Big Island — could be without after-school care if President Donald Trump's proposed 2018 fiscal budget were to take effect as is.

That's according to state advocates of before- and after-school programs who say Trump's plan to eliminate the \$1.2 billion 21st Century Community Learning Centers program could leave many low-income and at-risk students in Hawaii without a place to go when school ends for the day.

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The 21st Century program provides funding for before- and after-school and summer programs. It targets students in high-poverty and low-performing schools and is the only federal program currently dedicated to after-school care.

"We're completely disappointed," said Paula Adams, executive director of the Hawaii Afterschool Alliance, on Thursday. "We didn't expect to be singled out this way. ... (The 21st Century program) provides for kids who would otherwise be receiving no services ... it helps the poorest kids have success. ... From our point of view, if we don't have this program, these kids are going to be on the streets."

Hawaii schools received about \$5.7 million for the current academic year to implement the program. About \$1 million of that went to 12 schools on the Big Island, largely located in the Kona area and Waimea. Funding is allocated through a grant application process.

A spokeswoman for the state Department of Education said Thursday that Hawaii Island's biggest impact would be "the availability of these types of programs" going forward. In past years, schools in Pahoa, Pahala and Keaau also received 21st Century funding.

Trump's budget plan says the program "lacks strong evidence of meeting its objectives, such as improving student achievement."

Adams disputed that, claiming research shows otherwise. The alliance launched a campaign Thursday encouraging residents to write to federal lawmakers to restore after-school funding into the budget.

Eliminating the program would affect about 300 students at Kealakehe, Kahakai and Holualoa Elementary schools. Marcella McClelland, project director for the program, said that is disappointing. She said the program has given students the opportunity to participate in activities many wouldn't otherwise be exposed to — for example sewing, hula and music.

The grant covering the program is in its final year, McClelland added, but she was looking forward to applying again and even expanding in the future.

"I'm still trying to digest what this is all going to mean," McClelland said Thursday. "I hope it will somehow survive

whatever the powers in Washington do. I definitely say it's a

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Trump's budget would cut the Department of Education about 14 percent overall. It calls to increase spending by about \$168 million for charter schools, however, and invests about \$250 million for private schools.

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The budget would take effect Oct. 1, the start of the federal government's new fiscal year.

Email Kirsten Johnson at kjohnson@hawaiitribune-herald.com.

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