**Keeping the Lights On After School: A Proclamation**

WHEREAS, the citizens of the State of Tennessee stand firmly committed to quality afterschool programs and opportunities because they:

* Provide safe and engaging learning experiences that help children realize their full potential.
* Support working families by ensuring their children are safe and productive when they are out of their classrooms.
* Build stronger communities by involving students, parents, business leaders and adult volunteers in the lives of young people, thereby promoting positive relationships among youth, families and adults.
* Engage families, schools and community partners in advancing the welfare of our children.

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, afterschool programs have risen to the moment to support youth, and are critical supports to help youth recover from this challenging time and address their academic, social, and emotional needs. Afterschool programs provide engaging, hands-on learning and opportunities to connect with caring adults and peers. During the pandemic, programs have innovated to provide remote learning support, virtual programming, care for children of essential workers, meal support, wellness check-ins, and more. Today, programs are supporting young people and families as they navigate the return to school and will continue to innovate to meet ever-changing needs.

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee has provided significant leadership in the area of community involvement in the education and well-being of our youth, grounded in the principle that quality afterschool programs are key to helping our children become successful adults.

WHEREAS, *Lights On Afterschool*, the national celebration of afterschool programs held this year on October 28, 2021, promotes the importance of quality afterschool programs in the lives of children, families and communities.

WHEREAS, nearly 25 million families report that they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available.

WHEREAS, many afterschool programs across the country are facing operating challenges so severe that they are forced to consider closing their doors and turning off their lights.

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee is committed to investing in the health and safety of all young people by providing expanded learning opportunities that help our children learn and grow, while helping them develop the skills essential for success in life and work.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that I, Governor Bill Lee, do hereby proclaim October 28, 2021 as *"Lights On Afterschool* Day;" AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Governor enthusiastically endorses *Lights On Afterschool* and commits our state to engage in innovative afterschool programs and activities that ensure the lights stay on and the doors stay open for all children after school.