

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee

Re: WIC Expansion and FY 2022 Allocation for Agriculture Appropriations

Dear Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Granger:

Reducing nutrition insecurity, improving long-term health outcomes, and resolving disparities for low-income families and communities of color generate recognizable returns on investment and improve quality of life for all Americans. On behalf of the undersigned organizations that advocate for the health and nutrition needs of women and children, we urge increasing the overall allocation for the Agriculture Appropriations bill in fiscal year 2022 by at least \$2.2 billion to account for essential policy changes that will result in crucial additional investments for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

WIC is an essential part in USDA's increased focus on addressing nutrition insecurity in the federal nutrition programs and the broader food supply chain. With renewed scrutiny on how chronic diet-related conditions like obesity and type-2 diabetes drive healthcare spending in the United States, WIC's focus on enhancing access to healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is associated with increased stocking of healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods¹ and reductions in toddler obesity rates that nearly erase income-based disparities.² Prenatal WIC support is also highly effective by preventing costly conditions like preterm birth or low birthweight, which in turn reduces the risk of infant mortality by 33 percent.³ WIC saves lives and empowers new parents with the tools they need to raise children with nutritious diets and healthy behaviors.

WIC's proven public health success delivers a strong return on federal investment. For every dollar spent, WIC returns about \$2.48 in medical and productivity costs.⁴ For over twenty years, Congress has maintained a commitment to fully funding WIC, ensuring that all eligible individuals can receive benefits without rationing services or implementing waiting lists. In fulfilling this commitment, Congress is strategically investing in the health of the next generation while ensuring that WIC providers are effective and trusted community resources, building healthier environments for America's children.

In fiscal year 2021, WIC constituted over 18 percent of discretionary funding in the Agriculture Appropriations bill and is consistently one of the most substantial discretionary investments in the bill. This fiscal year, additional policy changes could have a significant impact on the necessary appropriations to maintain full funding that will sustain into fiscal year 2023 and beyond. Under the American Rescue Plan Act, USDA is implementing a wide range of strategies to connect eligible families with services. Under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, USDA is due to consider revisions to the WIC food packages this fiscal year that could result in higher benefit levels and increased access to healthy foods. Congress is also considering Child Nutrition Reauthorization, a process that should include longstanding, bipartisan proposals to expand eligibility for young children and postpartum women.

Policy changes that expand and enhance access to WIC's benefit and nutrition services are prudent steps in addressing high healthcare expenditures and building healthier outcomes for Americans. These essential reforms crucially sustain all elements of the food supply chain, from farmers, farmers markets, and distributors to grocery retailers and mom and pop corner stores, in delivering healthy foods to participating families. With the limits of the Budget Control Act of 2011 no longer applicable, appropriators can ensure ongoing support for WIC families and the entire food supply chain by increasing the overall allocation for the Agriculture Appropriations bill by at least \$2.2 billion in fiscal year 2022.

As USDA takes additional steps to prioritize nutrition security, we appreciate your commitment to supporting the necessary funding levels to best support our nation's food system and the needs of parents, babies, and young children.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

National WIC Association
1,000 Days
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Alliance to End Hunger
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Heart Association
American Society for Nutrition
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Bread for the World
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Children's National Hospital
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Threads
Danone North America
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Farmers Market Coalition
First Focus Campaign for Children
HealthConnect One
Hunger Free America
ICNA Council for Social Justice
March of Dimes
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Mom's Fresh Foods
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Grocers Association
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Partnership for America's Children

Public Advocacy for Kids
RESULTS
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
The Root Cause Coalition
Trust for America's Health
Union for Reform Judaism
United Fresh Produce Association
ZERO TO THREE

Statewide Organizations

Arizona Local Agency WIC Association, AZ
California WIC Association, CA
Hawaii Children's Action Network Speaks!, HI
Kentucky Youth Advocates, KY
Massachusetts Association of WIC Directors (MAWD), MA
Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention WIC, ME
Maine Children's Alliance, ME
Michigan WIC Association, MI
Montana Association of Christian, MT
Montana Association of WIC Agencies, MT
Montana Food Bank Network, MT
Montana Food Security Council, MT
Nebraska WIC Association, NE
Children's Advocacy Alliance, NV
Intertribal Council of Nevada, NV
New Jersey Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, NJ
WIC Association of New York State, Inc., NY
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, OK
Our Children Oregon, OR
Pennsylvania WIC Association, PA
Nutrition First, WA
West Virginia WIC, WV
Wisconsin WIC Association, WI
Wyoming WIC, WY

Local Organizations and Providers

Mobile County Health Department, AL
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation, AK
API Breastfeeding Task Force, CA
BreastfeedLA, CA
City of Long Beach WIC Program, CA
Community Action Partnership of Kern WIC Program, CA
Community Bridges WIC Program, CA
County of Riverside, Department of Public Health, CA
Family Promise of San Gabriel Valley, CA

Helping Hands Youth and Children Services, Inc., CA
Los Angeles Day Care, CA
Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, CA
Options for Learning, CA
PHFE WIC, CA
Populous Consulting, CA
PPOSBC-WIC, CA
Trinity County Health and Human Services, CA
Volunteers of America, CA
Watts Healthcare Corporation, CA
Eagle County Public Health, CO
Garfield County Public Health, CO
Northeast Colorado Health Department, CO
Teller County Public Health, CO
Optimus Health Care, CT
Howard University Hospital, DC
Unity Health Care, Inc., DC
Bay Clinic WIC, HI
Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., HI
Indiana Health Centers, Inc., IN
Jump IN for Healthy Kids, IN
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc., IN
South Shore Hospital, IL
Broadlawns Medical Center WIC Program, IA
Johnson County Public Health, IA
New Opportunities, Inc., IA
North Iowa Community Action, IA
Pottawattamie County WIC Program, IA
Northern Kentucky Health Department, KY
Lyon County WIC, KS
Pawnee County Health Department, KS
LSUHSC WIC, LA
Southeast Community Health Systems, LA
Tulane Nutrition, LA
Aroostook County Action Program, ME
Maine Family Planning WIC Program, ME
MaineGeneral WIC, ME
Midcoast Maine Community Action, ME
The Opportunity Alliance WIC, ME
Western Maine Community Action WIC Program, ME
York County Community Action Corporation, ME
Southern Maryland WIC Program, MD
Washington County Health Department WIC, MD
Cambridge/Somerville WIC, MA
Harbor Health Services, Inc., MA
Plymouth WIC, MA
Bay County Health Department WIC, MI
Calhoun County WIC, MI
Detroit Health Department, MI
Grand Traverse County Health Department, MI

Ingham County Health Department WIC, MI
InterCare Community Health Network WIC, MI
Kalamazoo County WIC, MI
Marquette County Health Department, MI
Mid Michigan Community Action Agency, MI
Mid Michigan District Health Department, MI
St. Clair County Health Department, MI
Hennepin County WIC Program, MN
Wright County Community Action, Inc., WIC, MN
Cass County Health Department WIC, MO
Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City, MO
Randolph County WIC, MO
Washington County Health Department, MO
Family Health Services, Inc. WIC, NE
Community Action Program of Belknap-Merrimack Counties, NH
Southern New Hampshire Services, NH
Southwestern Community Services WIC, NH
Gloucester County Department of Health WIC, NJ
Passaic WIC Program, NJ
Pueblo of San Felipe WIC Nutrition Program, NM
Zuni WIC Program, NM
Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center WIC, NY
Broome County Health Department WIC, NY
Catholic Charities of Long Island, NY
Chenango Health Network, Inc., NY
Cortland County Community Action Program, Inc., NY
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, NY
Delaware Opportunities, Inc., NY
Essex County Health Department WIC, NY
Harlem Hospital WIC, NY
LifeWorks Community Action, NY
Lincoln Hospital, NY
Morrisania WIC Program, NY
North Country Family Health Center, Inc., NY
Opportunities for Otsego, Inc., NY
Pro Action, NY
SPCC WIC, NY
Staten Island University Hospital, Northwell Center, NY
Sun River Health, NY
The Children's Agenda, NY
Tioga Opportunities, Inc., NY
Alamance County WIC, NC
Edgecombe County Health Department, NC
Montgomery County WIC, NC
Piedmont Health Services, Inc., NC
WCD WIC Program, OK
Bi-County WIC, PA
The Foundation for Delaware County, PA
UNFHCC Erie County WIC Program, PA
Faith Mission WIC Program, TX

Frio County WIC, TX
Hill Country Memorial WIC, TX
RHN WIC, TX
Vida Y Salud Health Systems Inc. WIC, TX
Klickitat County WIC, WA
Spokane Regional Health District, WA
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, WA
Dodge County WIC, WI
Family Health La Clinica WIC, WI
Sheboygan County WIC, WI

¹ Hillier A, McLaughlin J, Cannuscio CC, Chilton M, Krasny S, Karpyn A (2012) The Impact of WIC Food Package Changes on Access to Healthful Food in 2 Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviors* 44(3):210-216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2011.08.004>.

² Pan L, Blanck HM, Park S, et al. (2019) State-Specific Prevalence of Obesity Among Children Aged 2-4 Years Enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children – United States, 2010-2016. *MMRW Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 68:1057-1061. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6846a3.htm?s_cid=mm6846a3_w.

³ Soneji S, Beltran-Sanchez H (2019) Association of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children With Preterm Birth and Infant Mortality. *JAMA* 2(12). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.16722>.

⁴ Niango RA, Wang MC, Basurto-Davila R, Nobari TZ, Prelip M, Arah AA, Whaley SE (2019) Economic evaluation of California prenatal participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to prevent preterm birth. *Preventive Medicine* 124:42-49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.04.011>.