

**FRIENDS OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM
FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
c/o National WIC Association**

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chair
Agriculture-FDA Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Agriculture-FDA Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee

Re: WIC Funding in FY 2022

Dear Chair Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

Building a stronger America after the COVID-19 pandemic requires investing in a healthier next generation. Expanding access to healthy foods and reducing nutrition insecurity are among the most cost-efficient investments and interventions to meaningfully tackle chronic diet-related conditions like obesity and diabetes – prime drivers of high healthcare costs. Evidence demonstrates that a robustly funded WIC Program guarantees results. The undersigned organizations – a broad coalition of maternal health and public health organizations, children’s advocates, agriculture partners, and industry stakeholders – urge the House of Representatives to fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at \$6 billion without a rescission, consistent with the President’s Budget request for fiscal year 2022 and substantial enough to extend the increases in fruit and vegetable benefits through September 2022.

The President’s Budget calls for essential new investments, accounting for a \$1.2 billion increase over fiscal year 2021 levels, to sustain crucial food benefit increases into fiscal year 2022, beyond the four months authorized in the American Rescue Plan Act. The benefit increases triple the value of fruits and vegetable benefits for participating women and children – from a mere \$9 or \$11 per month to \$35 per month.

Plainly said, increasing access to fruits and vegetables leads to healthier children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) noted in 2019 that the addition of fruit and vegetable benefits to WIC led to a decrease in childhood obesity rates. This targeted, early intervention is a critical step toward growing a healthier population and mitigating chronic diet-related conditions like obesity and diabetes.

Notably, the increase in WIC benefits supports other stakeholders in the food supply chain, including domestic producers, retailers, and farmers markets, providing new and enhanced markets for fruit and vegetable purchases. Increasing WIC benefits goes hand-in-hand with investing in American jobs and rural communities.

The proposed funding may not be inclusive of all of WIC’s needs, as longstanding bipartisan reforms in Child Nutrition Reauthorization may result in greater annual participation and program reforms, necessitating a higher investment than proposed in the President’s Budget. This underscores the necessity of including additional funding requested by the President’s Budget in the contingency fund, as well as funding to sustain and modernize technology systems (Management Information Systems) to ensure an accessible participant experience.

If federal spending is truly a reflection of the nation's values, then prioritizing healthy futures for our nation's children is crucial. Congress must ensure that WIC is fully funded to sustain the expanded benefit levels that increase access to fruits and vegetables and strengthen the foundation for future life success for our moms and young children.

Sincerely,

National WIC Association
1,000 Days
ADK Strategy Group
Alliance to End Hunger
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Heart Association
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Azimuth Investment
Bread for the World
Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)
Children's HealthWatch
Coalition on Human Needs
Danone NA
FARE
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
March of Dimes
National Grocers Association
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nurse-Family Partnership
RESULTS
Save the Children
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Society of St. Andrew
Trust for America's Health
United Fresh Produce Association
ZERO TO THREE

cc: Chair Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member Kay Granger