

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

November 4, 2021

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Agriculture/FDA  
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture/FDA  
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Agriculture/FDA  
House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Andy Harris  
Acting Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture/FDA  
House Appropriations Committee

Re: Extending the WIC Benefit Bump in FY 2022

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Hoeven, Chair Bishop, and Ranking Member Harris:

Since April 2021, over 4.7 million participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) received enhanced benefits to purchase additional fruits and vegetables. Investing in access to nutritious foods is a cost-effective strategy that supports the needs of parents with young children, improves child health outcomes amid an alarming rise in pediatric obesity, and creates new markets as producers navigate disruptions to the food supply chain. The undersigned organizations – a diverse coalition of maternal and public health organizations, children’s advocates, agriculture partners, and industry stakeholders – thank you for your work with the continuing resolution to extend the WIC benefit bump through December 31, 2021. **With this benefit now set to expire at the end of the calendar year, this coalition now urges Congress to further extend the WIC benefit bump through September 30, 2022.**

The WIC benefit bump is an extraordinarily popular provision, with more than three-quarters of likely voters (76%) in favor of increasing federal funding for WIC to provide more healthy and nutritious food to participating families (ALG Research/McLaughlin & Associates, September 2021). This includes 62% of Republicans, 76% of independents, and 90% of Democrats.

WIC’s Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for fruit and vegetable purchases was established in 2009 as part of broader revisions that aligned the WIC food packages with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These revisions increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, led to greater variety in children’s diets, increased stocking of fresh produce in low-income neighborhoods, and reduced obesity rates among WIC-enrolled toddlers. By 2016, the 2009 food package changes erased income-based disparities in childhood obesity by aligning the obesity rate for WIC toddlers with the national childhood obesity rate for children age 2-5.

With medical providers and researchers reporting alarming increases in pediatric obesity during the pandemic, enhanced CVB for WIC participants is an effective strategy to support children’s healthy development. Early intervention is critical to mitigate childhood obesity, which is a strong indicator of continued obesity into adulthood. With an 8% nationwide increase in child participation since February 2020, WIC is only broadening its reach and well positioned to strengthen child nutrition outcomes during the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, WIC's CVB amounted to only \$9 per month for children and \$11 per month for women. The continuing resolution wisely echoed 2017 recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to align CVB values with 50% of recommended intake as measured in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, resulting in \$24 per month for children, \$43 per month for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$47 per month for breastfeeding women. This results in meaningful differences at the household level, with the child benefit expanding from \$2.25 per week to \$6 per week.

Enhanced CVB value returns directly to the local economy, fueling retail transactions and creating new markets for fruit and vegetable producers. WIC transactions bolster sales at smaller and rural vendors and, in some states, farmers markets and farm stands. With added value, families are not only purchasing more fruits and vegetables, but also a greater variety. The additional benefit is versatile and can be responsive to varied supply at retail grocery stores, while also ensuring that higher-cost options are within reach, including pre-sliced produce or seasonal fruits like berries, pears, or mangos.

As negotiations continue on the fiscal year 2022 appropriations bills, the undersigned organizations urge Congress to extend the WIC benefit bump through September 30, 2022 before federal funding expires on December 3. WIC providers, participating families, and affected retailers and producers need clarity about whether Congress will sustain this popular and effective benefits increase. We look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead to secure this crucial investment that will strengthen children's health outcomes.

Sincerely,

National WIC Association  
1,000 Days  
Advocates for Better Children's Diets  
A Better Balance  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Alliance to End Hunger  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Heart Association  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Balanced  
Bread for the World  
Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation of Harvard Law School  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI)  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's HealthWatch  
Coalition for Healthy School Food  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Danone NA  
Fair Food Network

Farmers Market Coalition  
Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE)  
FoodCorps  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health  
Hunger Free America, Inc.  
ICNA Council for Social Justice (ICNA CSJ)  
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future  
Leah's Pantry  
March of Dimes  
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
Mom2Mom Global  
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association for Health and Fitness  
National League for Nursing  
National Grocers Association  
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition  
Nemours Children's Health  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Partnership for America's Children  
Pinnacle Prevention  
The Praxis Project  
Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness  
RESULTS  
Save the Children  
Share Our Strength  
Society of Behavioral Medicine  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior  
Souper Bowl of Caring, Inc.  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance, including member companies  
    Danone NA, Mars Incorporated, Nestlé USA, and Unilever United States  
Trust for America's Health  
Tusk Philanthropies  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
United Fresh Produce Association  
Vouchers 4 Veggies – Eat SF  
ZERO TO THREE

cc: The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
The Honorable Richard Shelby  
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
The Honorable Kay Granger