

February 21, 2019

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, **we urge you to co-sponsor and champion the Wise Investment in our Children Act (WIC Act)**. The WIC Act would improve maternal and child health outcomes in the United States by expanding WIC eligibility for at-risk infants, children, and new mothers. The WIC Act thoughtfully reduces barriers to participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), clearing the way for a new generation of healthy and productive Americans.

WIC serves about 7 million pregnant women, new moms, infants, and young children up to the age of five. The WIC Act is a vital first step in strengthening a successful program and expanding WIC's ability to help families start healthy habits before children start school. WIC participation improves diets, supports healthy pregnancies and births, and influences positive behavior change that result in meaningful health outcomes.

WIC is a strong investment in our country's future. For nearly 45 years, WIC has contributed to healthier pregnancies, improved birth outcomes for low-income women and infants, and healthier growth and development of young children at nutritional risk. WIC's nutrition interventions reduce the likelihood of preterm birth, low birthweight, infant mortality, birth defects like spina bifida, and severe obesity in young children. WIC's breastfeeding support has increased breastfeeding rates, providing mothers with needed counseling and supplies to sustain breastfeeding. WIC's public health screenings and referrals play a role in ensuring vaccinations and addressing risk factors associated with maternal mortality. WIC is a down payment on the next generation of Americans, a proven and cost-efficient program that returns significant public health successes.

The WIC Act would address a crucial gap in nutrition assistance for young children by extending WIC eligibility through age six. About half of children entering kindergarten start school after the age of five-and-a-half, whereas children currently lose access to WIC on their fifth birthday. During a critical period of growth, young children need continued and targeted nutrition support to ensure healthy diets, building the foundation for a healthy lifespan. The WIC Act would ensure that all children who are income-qualified can make a seamless transition between WIC and school lunch, sustaining WIC's nutritional support during a period of development that could determine a child's educational and future success.

The WIC Act would reduce administrative barriers for families. The WIC Act would permit states the option to certify infants for two years instead of one year, eliminating duplicative paperwork and encouraging families to continue to connect their children with WIC's nutrition supports. The burdensome one-year certification requirement is an unnecessary barrier to participant access, deterring parents from continuing to obtain nutrition support on behalf of their children.

The WIC Act would help to address the crisis of maternal mortality. The WIC Act would extend eligibility for postpartum women to two years, building upon the program's nutrition support and efforts to improve diets. Medical professionals recognize that good maternal health and diet prior to pregnancy is of vital importance to improving health outcomes for both the mother and infants. Increased eligibility for postpartum women can sustain and advance diet and nutrition outcomes during the inter-conception period, improving the health outcomes in subsequent pregnancies.

The WIC Act is a critical step to strengthening WIC's ability to improve maternal and child health. WIC successfully serves approximately half of all infants born in the United States, and these additional steps to expand eligibility and reduce administrative barriers will ensure that the next generation is healthier and more productive. We urge you to co-sponsor this legislation and actively champion its passage through Congress.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

American Heart Association

American Public Health Association

Asian Services in Action, Inc.

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Bread for the World

Center for Law and Social Policy

Center for Science in the Public Interest

Child Care Aware® of America

Children's Alliance

Coalition on Human Needs

Feeding America

First Focus Campaign for Children

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

March of Dimes

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

MomsRising

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association

National Institute for Children's Health Quality

National Partnership for Women & Families

National WIC Association

National Women's Law Center

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Ounce of Prevention Fund

RESULTS

Share Our Strength

Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior

The Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies

Trust for America's Health

United Fresh Produce Association

United States Breastfeeding Committee

ZERO TO THREE