

WIC Letter for Additional Ag Approps Investments

PLEASE SIGN ON BY COB THURSDAY 5/13

The below organizational letter - for national, state, and local organizations - recognizes that forthcoming policy change in Child Nutrition Reauthorization, USDA rulemaking, and additional administrative activities could impact WIC funding needs drastically in fiscal year 2022. To ensure that WIC providers have the resources necessary to immediately get benefits out the door to eligible families, NWA asks for your support in securing additional investment in the overall allocation for the Ag Approps bill.

May XX, 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 neighborhoods and reductions in toddler obesity rates that nearly erase income-based disparities. 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. 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. 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 WIC Association
[other organizations]

* Required

