

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Chairman  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

As you work to finalize Fiscal Year 2022 funding for the Department of Agriculture, we urge you to fully fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to ensure that the program can serve all eligible pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children throughout the entire fiscal year. We request \$7 billion in overall budget authority for WIC to reflect expected changes in program access and benefit levels resulting from the American Rescue Plan, the ongoing Child Nutrition Reauthorization process, and forthcoming rulemaking on the WIC food packages. The budget authority should be inclusive of annual set-aside priorities, including additional investments in management information systems (MIS) and technology projects, which have not been funded since fiscal year 2015.

WIC is the premier preventive public health nutrition program supporting low-income mothers and young children who have or are at risk for developing nutrition-related diseases and disorders. WIC benefits are not limited only to food; participants also benefit from nutrition education, breastfeeding education and support, and referrals to medical and social services.

Studies have repeatedly shown that WIC improves birth outcomes for high-risk mothers, reduces the likelihood of very low birthweight babies, infant mortality, and helps to get women into prenatal care earlier. Children enrolled in WIC are more likely to be immunized on time, consume key nutrients, and have higher cognitive development scores than their peers not participating in WIC. Study after study has shown that WIC works. Taxpayers receive a healthy return in costs of at least \$2.48 avoided for every

dollar of investment. These outcomes change lives and save taxpayer dollars. That is why Congress must continue to adequately fund this proven program.

Within the \$7 billion of overall funding for WIC, we urge you to provide dedicated set-aside funding for the following purposes:

### ***Breastfeeding***

We ask that you continue the funding level of \$90 million for WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program, to provide tailored peer-to-peer support. WIC peer counselors are demonstrated to improve breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity and close racial disparities in breastfeeding. Since FY 2020, the current funding level has helped State Agencies hire additional peer counselors, extend peer counselor hours, and resolve other service gaps – especially in rural areas – to continue WIC's essential work in promoting, supporting, and strengthening breastfeeding services.

### ***Infrastructure***

We urge you to continue funding WIC infrastructure at \$14 million, which supports a variety of essential program priorities, including brick-and-mortar infrastructure repairs and improvements, special breastfeeding projects, and innovative special projects that enhance program access and participant retention.

### ***Management Information Systems***

We request that you provide \$35 million set-aside funding for investment in the management information systems (MIS), which has not been funded since fiscal year 2015. MIS platforms are the primary state database used to manage participant data and issue benefits. As States complete the transition to electronic-benefit transfer (EBT) payment, state agencies would benefit from additional investment in MIS platforms in order to accommodate the new transaction system, replace aging equipment, improve data security, and manage analysis of new EBT data to better track participant behaviors of WIC utilization.

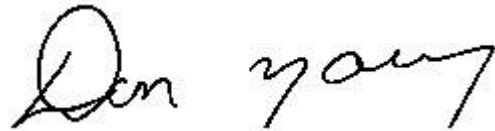
We also request that the Subcommittee include report language that directs USDA to conduct a food package rulemaking that increases the overall value of the WIC benefit in a manner consistent with scientific recommendations. The 2017 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) and the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides a sufficient nutrition science basis for USDA to complete a rulemaking in FY 2022.

WIC's early intervention supports the healthy growth and development of America's next generation, leading to better birth and health outcomes and saving the American taxpayer costs in the long run. We believe this is one of the strongest investments that Congress can make. We appreciate your consideration of this request and again urge you to ensure that WIC is robustly funded in FY 2022.

Sincerely,



Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress

Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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