



**Congress of the United States**  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2209

May 8, 2020

Administrator Pam Miller  
Food and Nutrition Service,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1320 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Administrator Miller:

Thank you for your efforts to ensure that women and children in the WIC program continue to receive benefits amid the COVID-19 public health emergency. We write to urge the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to take additional steps to guarantee the safety of WIC shoppers for the duration of this emergency. Specifically, we request that FNS use the authority granted under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127) to waive restrictions requiring in-person redemption of WIC benefits in the presence of a cashier and permit online or phone purchases with WIC until the conclusion of the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Scaling up the SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot program authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill has improved the shopping experience for families who depend on federal nutrition programs by reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for both shoppers and grocery store employees. We understand that it is not possible at this point to integrate WIC transactions into the SNAP online ordering systems, given key differences between SNAP and WIC benefit disbursement. However, USDA should be proactively exploring and supporting alternative transaction models for WIC, such as self-checkout, curbside pickup, or home delivery, all of which would better protect the health of WIC shoppers, grocery store employees, and their families.

As the SNAP pilot program expands and retailers are offering an array of options for consumers, WIC participants are being left behind. The risks of in-person shopping could deter WIC participation, leaving families without access to vital support throughout pregnancy and early childhood. Some retailers are even closing their doors to in-person shopping and adopting exclusive curbside or delivery models. This could inhibit WIC participant access to authorized vendors within their communities if WIC is excluded in these alternative transaction models.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this request, we respectfully ask that you follow the determination of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to define the “conclusion” of this public health emergency.

It is crucial that the WIC program provides flexibility to safeguard the health of American families while ensuring the continued integrity of the program. As state agencies and retailers develop workable alternative models for purchasing and delivering groceries, we respectfully request that FNS use the authority granted by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to grant limited waivers to ensure the WIC program has the flexibility to adapt and ensure families have safe shopping experiences.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress

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