



Statement Opposing H.R. 3529

As organizations that envision a nation of healthy women and children, we are strongly opposed to H.R. 3529, the WIC Improvement Act, which mandates the inclusion of vitamin supplements in WIC. This legislation would override the sound scientific judgment of our nation's leading nutrition science experts.

WIC is regarded as one of the most successful of all federal programs with a 72% public approval rating. A significant body of research has consistently found that WIC is a cost-effective investment that improves the nutrition and health of low-income families — leading to healthier infants, more nutritious diets and better health care for children, and higher academic achievement for students. An important reason for WIC's success is that the program provides a science-based food package to supplement and enhance the diets of women and young children.

The WIC food package is reviewed at least once every 10 years by a National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) expert committee. The NASEM review is a rigorous, science-based process that examines nutrition science as well as the dietary needs and purchasing behaviors of WIC-eligible women and children. The foods in the WIC food packages are specifically recommended by NASEM to supplement the essential nutrients found lacking in the diets of low-income mothers and young children, and WIC's nutrition education helps families make wise, healthy food choices.

NASEM's most recent review culminated in a final report published in January 2017. After months of careful consideration of the evidence, expert presentations, and extensive public comment periods, NASEM opted not to recommend adding vitamin supplements to the WIC food packages. Now that USDA is in the process of interpreting and implementing the NASEM recommendations, there will be further opportunities for public comment. During the last review of the WIC food packages, USDA provided two public comment periods after the publication of NASEM's final report, and analyzed over 7,500 comment letters before implementing its final rule.

We strongly oppose H.R. 3529, which bypasses the NASEM review process in an attempt to alter the contents of the WIC food packages. The contents of the WIC food packages should be determined by nutrition scientists, not by congressional mandates.

Millions of mothers and young children depend on the supplemental nutrition assistance provided by the WIC program, which is proven to improve birth outcomes, reduce the incidence of low birthweight, and reduce obesity in young children. H.R. 3529 could undermine that progress by intervening in the science-based WIC food package.