

August 13, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita Lowey
House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Aderholt, and Ranking Members Lowey and Bishop:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of the Senate's Fiscal Year 2019 appropriation of \$67.5 million for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program. This funding level represents a \$7.5 million, or approximately 15%, increase in funding for the program. Despite being a critical and effective breastfeeding support shown to increase the rate of both initiation^{i,ii} and durationⁱⁱⁱ of breastfeeding, the WIC breastfeeding peer counselor program does not receive adequate appropriations to reach all eligible WIC moms. As a result, an average of only 53% of pregnant and postpartum participants are enrolled in peer counseling.

With additional funding, we can ensure that more WIC moms are able to access this vital service. For moms like Kendra Bentley of North Carolina, the WIC breastfeeding peer counselor program can make the difference between continuing to breastfeed and having to give up when challenges arise. Kendra reports that the program helped her to meet her breastfeeding goals, despite initially low milk production as a result of previous breast surgery, and her daughter being born with a tongue tie. "I would not be the breastfeeding mama and donor milk advocate I am today without the support WIC provided to me during the most challenging time in my life," says Kendra.

Moms and babies like Kendra and her daughter, Charlotte, are counting on you to support this important public health program. We ask you to maintain the Senate funding level of \$67.5 million for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program in your FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Advocates for Better Children's Diets
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Bread for the World
Child Care Aware® of America
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Coalition on Human Needs
First Focus Campaign for Children
March of Dimes
MomsRising
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National WIC Association
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Public Advocacy for Kids
Trust for America's Health
ZERO TO THREE

ⁱ Gross S, Resnick A, Cross-Barnet C, Nanda JP, Augustyn M, Paige DM. (2009). The differential impact of WIC Peer Counseling programs on breastfeeding initiation across the state of Maryland. *Journal of Human Lactation*; Vol. 26:4: 435-43.

ⁱⁱ Yun S, Lui Q, Mertzlufft K, Krusse C, White M, Fuller P, Zhu BP (2010) et al. Evaluation of the Missouri WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) Breastfeeding Peer Counselling Programme. *Public Health Nutrition*; Vol. 13:2:229-37.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kistin N, Abrahamson R, Dublin P (1994) Effects of peer counselors on breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity, and duration among low-income urban women. *Journal of Human Lactation*; Vol. 10:11- 15.