

**FRIENDS OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR  
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)  
c/o National WIC Association**

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

For decades, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has delivered quality nutrition services in community-based clinical settings to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes and promote healthy child development. In order to sustain much-needed program modifications to provide services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, **we urge that any final legislative package that responds to the public health and economic crises include an extension of USDA waiver authority for WIC services through at least September 30, 2021.**

Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was vested with authority to waive statutory physical presence requirements and other regulatory barriers to access as a result of COVID-19. That authority is set to expire on September 30 of this year. Since March, every state has obtained a WIC program waiver to modify service delivery and protect the health and safety of WIC staff and clients. The vast majority of states have implemented remote services, which allow for new families to obtain WIC services through telephone, video conferencing, or other online platforms. Other states have adopted curbside models that minimize risk while providing services at clinic sites.

These modifications are necessary health and safety steps to delivering services and meeting the needs of WIC participants. Since February, WIC has served an increasing number of families – reversing nationwide trends of caseload decline and reaching families that are newly eligible due to loss of employment or income. Several states have reported significant increases in participation since February 2020 – including Kentucky (8%) and California (11%). Should these waivers not be extended, WIC clinics will be forced to open prematurely, eligible families will be deterred from seeking nutrition support, and more families will be put at risk of contracting COVID-19.

State flexibility is essential as WIC agencies plan for continued remote services, safe and thoughtful reopening of clinics, or other modifications to adapt to the spread of COVID-19 within their own communities. This is especially pertinent given updated recommendations from the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicating that pregnant people may have increased risk for severe illness and adverse pregnancy outcomes upon contracting COVID-19. Additional waiver authority is critical for state and local governments, for providers, and for the health of the next generation of Americans.

Extending waiver authority is the bare minimum to ensure safe ongoing nutrition support. As Congress considers an appropriate recovery package, robust investment in the federal nutrition programs is crucial. In addition to waiver extensions, we urge consideration of other key nutrition provisions – including enhancing the value of WIC’s fruit and vegetable voucher, an increase in the benefit levels for SNAP households, and extending and expanding the Pandemic-EBT Program. All of these provisions are needed to ensure that our nation’s children have access to nutritious foods throughout the pandemic.

We thank you for your diligent work to address the nutrition and economic impacts of this public health crisis and look forward to working with you on swiftly advancing additional COVID-related relief. Please direct any questions to Brian Dittmeier, Senior Public Policy Counsel at the National WIC Association, at [bdittmeier@nwica.org](mailto:bdittmeier@nwica.org).

Sincerely,

### **National Organizations**

1,000 Days  
A Better Balance  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
African American Health Alliance  
American Academy of Pediatrics\*  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Public Human Services Association  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists  
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Alliance to End Hunger  
Bread for the World  
Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre  
Catholic Charities USA  
Center for Science in the Public Interest  
Children’s Defense Fund  
Children’s HealthWatch  
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association (CAPP)  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Danone North America, PBC  
EKF Diagnostics, Inc. d/b/a Stanbio Laboratory  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)  
HealthConnect One  
Hunger Free America  
Islamic Relief USA  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
March of Dimes

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
MomsRising  
NAACP  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Association of Counties (NACo)  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Community Action Partnership  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Employment Law Project  
National Human Services Assembly  
National REACH Coalition  
National WIC Association  
National Women's Law Center  
Nurse-Family Partnership  
Partnership for America's Children  
Poligon Education Fund  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)  
RESULTS  
Share Our Strength  
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior  
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance  
Trust for America's Health  
Union for Reform Judaism  
United Fresh Produce Association  
United States Breastfeeding Committee, Inc.  
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network  
ZERO TO THREE

**\*State Organizations**

Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Maryland Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Michigan Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Minnesota Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Nebraska Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
North Carolina Pediatric Society  
Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Tennessee Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Utah Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Wisconsin Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

cc: The Honorable Pat Roberts  
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
The Honorable Bobby Scott  
The Honorable Virginia Foxx