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EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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February 8, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chair Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, we write to underscore the need for fully funding the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). For more than 25 years, there has been a bipartisan commitment to provide sufficient WIC funding to serve all eligible participants. WIC currently serves over half of all infants born in the country and continues to be a lifesaving nutrition intervention program that minimizes avoidable health and developmental issues for low-income, nutritionally at-risk women, infants, and children.¹

Last year, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) outlined the need for an additional \$1.4 billion in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 funding for WIC² due to a significant increase in

¹ Food and Nutrition Serv., *About WIC – WIC at a Glance*, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC. (April 7, 2023), [About WIC - WIC at a Glance | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/about-wic-wic-at-a-glance).

² Tony Romm, *White House asks Congress to pass short-term spending deal, boost food aid*, THE WASH. POST (Aug. 31, 2023, 9:00 AM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/08/31/white-house-congressional-spending-government-shutdown/>.

The Honorable Mike Johnson
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
February 8, 2024
Page 2

participation.³ If Congress fails to include additional WIC funding, as many as two million young children and pregnant and postpartum adults could lose access to WIC benefits entirely.⁴ Any funding shortfall would force eligible new parents and children (predominantly preschoolers, toddlers, and postpartum adults) onto waiting lists and deny them vital nutrition benefits and WIC services that are critical for healthy development.⁵ Even more concerning, many of the parents and children who would be turned away from the program come from families of color that are already at an increased risk of maternal and infant mortality compared to white families.⁶

WIC safeguards the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.⁷ The cost-effectiveness of WIC, coupled with its quality-of-life improvements for participants, makes it one of the country's most successful federal nutrition programs.⁸ For instance, a study of California's prenatal participation in WIC demonstrates that the program saves \$2.48 in health care costs on average for every dollar of funding.⁹ Furthermore, every dollar spent on prenatal WIC participation is estimated to save Medicaid between \$1.77 and \$3.13 in health care costs during the first 60 days after delivery.¹⁰

To prevent any disruption to a program that is crucial to supporting new parents and young children, it is vital that WIC is fully funded and continues to align with projected participation and food costs. Hundreds of public health and faith-based organizations and advocacy groups,

³ U.S. Dep't of Agric., [WIC Data Tables](https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program), Food and Nutrition Serv. (Sept. 8, 2023), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program>.

⁴ Katie Bergh et al., *About 2 Million Parents and Young Children Could Be Turned Away From WIC by September Without Full Funding*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Dec. 12, 2023), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/about-2-million-parents-and-young-children-could-be-turned-away-from-wic>.

⁵ Zoe Neuberger, *Young Children and New Parents in Every State Could Be Turned Away From WIC or Have Their Benefits Cut Under Pending Appropriations Bills*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Sept. 12, 2023, 9:00 AM), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/young-children-and-new-parents-in-every-state-could-be-turned-away-from-wic-or-have-their>.

⁶ Lauren Hall & Zoe Neuberger, *Eligible Low-Income Children Missing Out on Crucial WIC Benefits During Pandemic*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Oct. 5, 2021), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/eligible-low-income-children-missing-out-on-crucial-wic-benefits-during>; Katie Bergh & Lauren Hall, *Looming WIC Funding Shortfall Would Jeopardize Access to WIC's Proven Benefits and Disproportionately Harm Black and Hispanic Families*, CTR. ON BUDGET AND POL'Y PRIORITIES (Oct. 26, 2023, 5:00 AM), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/looming-wic-funding-shortfall-would-jeopardize-access-to-wics-proven-benefits-and>.

⁷ Special Supplemental Nutrition Plan for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), USDA, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic> (last visited Feb. 5, 2024).

⁸ Food and Nutrition Serv., *About WIC: How WIC Helps*, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC. (May 23, 2023), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-how-wic-helps>.

⁹ Roch A. Nianogo et al., *Economic evaluation of California prenatal participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to prevent preterm birth*, 124 PREVENTIVE MED. 42, 45 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.04.011>.

¹⁰ Food and Nutrition Serv., *Supra note 9*.

The Honorable Mike Johnson
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
February 8, 2024
Page 3

including the American Academy of Pediatrics, Save the Children, Children’s Defense Fund, and the National Council of Churches, have urged Congress to act given the ramifications of underfunding the program.¹¹ We urge you to ensure that WIC funding is adequate to meet the need.

Sincerely,

ROBERT C. “BOBBY” SCOTT
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

JOE COURTNEY
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Member of Congress

MARK DeSAULNIER
Member of Congress

DONALD NORCROSS
Member of Congress

¹¹ Letter to Congressional Leaders, *National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers and the National WIC Association* (Sept. 26, 2023), <https://media.nwica.org/nwa%20ncit%20wic%20coalition%20letter%20209.25.23.pdf>.

The Honorable Mike Johnson
The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
The Honorable Kay Granger
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February 8, 2024
Page 4



PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress



SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress



LUCY McBATH
Member of Congress



JAHANA HAYES
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