January 5, 2024

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries,

We write to highlight the urgent funding shortfall facing the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) that poses a significant and immediate risk to vulnerable young children and pregnant and postpartum women. We urge you to ensure any final appropriations package fully funds the WIC program for fiscal year 2024 (FY24) in order to avert disastrous participation or benefit cuts.

WIC is a vital lifeline for millions of vulnerable American families. It provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, health care referrals, and other important services to nearly 7 million low-income pregnant and postpartum participants, infants, and young children nationwide.¹ For more than 25 years, there has been a bipartisan commitment to provide adequate funding for WIC to serve every eligible family that relies on the program and to ensure that those in need are not turned away. At the foundation of this commitment is substantial evidence of WIC’s positive impacts on the health and development of its participants.

Higher-than-expected program participation and rising food costs mean WIC funding levels proposed in both the House and Senate annual appropriations bills fall far short of what is needed for FY24. In recognition of the urgency of this shortfall, the Biden Administration has requested Congress provide $1.4 billion in emergency funding for WIC.² If Congress fails to act and continues WIC’s current funding level for the rest of the fiscal year, approximately 2 million pregnant and postpartum women and young children would be turned away from the program by September 2024—an inexcusable outcome.³

¹ [https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/wic-program)  
If Congress fails to fully fund WIC, states will soon be forced to start turning eligible families away. Eligible applicants and current participants, primarily postpartum women who are not breastfeeding and children, could be put on waiting lists—leaving them without the services they rely on indefinitely. There are more than half a million current WIC participants who are pregnant and will need to renew their benefits shortly after giving birth. Under a funding shortfall, some of these new mothers could see their benefits halted. These new moms would lose access to WIC’s nutritious foods at a time that is critical for their health and their child’s development. Such devastating outcomes would disproportionately impact people of color, who are already at higher risk for severe pregnancy-related health issues including maternal mortality.

But even if states can, to some degree, avoid waiting lists, many participants would still be harmed by a shortfall. States are expected to reduce outreach, limit clinic hours, and leave staff vacancies unfilled to reduce spending, which are measures that impact all potentially eligible people. Additionally, once word gets out that states cannot serve certain applicants, people who are more medically at-risk and would be prioritized for participation may mistakenly believe that they would be denied benefits and decide not to apply. We also know that any cuts to specific WIC services, particularly the evidence-based fruit and vegetable incentives program, would undermine the program’s effectiveness. We urge you to reject any proposal that eliminates or cuts fruit and vegetable vouchers, or any other WIC service.

America’s maternal health crisis is growing worse by the day, and further disruption to WIC in the coming months would be catastrophic. As you work to finalize a government funding package, we urge you to fully fund WIC and protect vulnerable women and children from losing access to the vital support that WIC provides. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress

Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

Becca Balint
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress
Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Mary Sattler Peltola  
Member of Congress

Patrick K. Ryan  
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Jason Crow
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress
Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Andy Kim  
Member of Congress

Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress

Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress

Colin Z. Alfred  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress
Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Mike Levin  
Member of Congress

John Fetterman  
United States Senator

Julia Brownley  
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Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Sean Casten  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Yadira Caraveo, M.D.  
Member of Congress
Melanie A. Stansbury  
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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Tina Smith  
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Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress

Nikki Budzinski  
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Member of Congress
Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress

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United States Senator

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Bernard Sanders
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Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
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Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
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Norma J. Torres  
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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

Cori Bush  
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Brian Schatz  
United States Senator
Scion of the Enslaved Africans - Sacrificed to Make America Great

Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Al Green
Member of Congress
Scion of the Enslaved Africans - Sacrificed to Make America Great

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress
John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

Gregorio Kilili Camacho  
Sablan  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress

Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress

CC:
The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Kay Granger, Chairwoman, House Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations