

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

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September 29, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair Appropriations Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chair Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker McCarthy, Minority Leader Jeffries, Chairwoman Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chairman Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We write to you today to raise our profound concerns with the level of funding allocated to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and to demonstrate the risks that Coloradans enrolled in the program face under the constraints of a looming fiscal year 2024 budget deadline.

For nearly 50 years, since 1974, WIC has successfully invested in our nation's most vulnerable constituents, reducing hunger, improving diet quality, and preventing disease. Today, for 89,761 Coloradans who receive these monthly benefits—women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum, as well as infants, toddlers, and children up to age 5—WIC serves as a foundational resource, an unflinching lifeline.<sup>1</sup>

As Members representing the great State of Colorado, we know that WIC works:

- WIC participants are **four times more likely to be food secure** than eligible non-participants;<sup>2</sup>
- Eligible women who participate in WIC give birth to **healthier babies who are more likely to survive infancy**.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Colorado WIC Data Dashboard | Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#)

<sup>2</sup> [WIC Works: WIC Works: Addressing the Nutrition and Health Needs of Low-Income Families for More Than Four Decades | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

<sup>3</sup> [WIC Works: WIC Works: Addressing the Nutrition and Health Needs of Low-Income Families for More Than Four Decades | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)

- For every dollar invested, WIC returns at least **\$2.48 in medical, education, and productivity savings**;<sup>4</sup>
- Nationally, WIC serves nearly **half of all infants born in the United States** each year;<sup>5</sup>
- From January 2023 to August 2023, Colorado WIC program benefits brought **\$13,127,104 to Colorado grocery stores** with the fruit and vegetable Cash Value Benefit (CVB) purchases alone<sup>6</sup> and **\$48,457,294 to grocery stores** with all WIC program food benefit purchases during that same time.<sup>7</sup>
- The CVB for fruits and vegetables is the **highest-redeemed food category for Colorado WIC families**, supporting our producers and nutrition for eligible WIC recipients;

In addition to delivering results, WIC gives back to our constituents and to our economy, investing in mothers and young children in Colorado and across the country, ensuring they can thrive without the risk of food and nutrition insecurity. Furthermore, participation is growing: WIC serves nearly 90,000 Coloradans and numbers are steadily increasing. Just over a year ago, in August 2022, 80,262 Coloradans were enrolled in the program; by July 2023, that number had climbed to 88,036.<sup>8</sup> Increased engagement among eligible participants happens when federal programs deliver real value—in the case of WIC, it's meaningful nutrition support and proven long-term health and economic outcomes for Americans.

Current WIC funding levels in both the Senate and House Appropriations bills are insufficient. In Colorado, under the Senate Agriculture Appropriations, set at the President's Budget Request (PBR) at \$6.3 billion, a projected 7,500 Coloradans could be turned away from WIC; up to 66,000 eligible persons in our great State could potentially be harmed by the funding currently allocated in both chambers.<sup>9</sup> The current House Agriculture, Rural Development and Food and Drug Administration Appropriations bill provides staggeringly low funding levels for WIC, currently appropriating \$5.5 billion for the program – \$185 million below fiscal year 2023 levels, despite increased participation. At these stripped funding levels, Congress would fail to hold to the longstanding bipartisan agreement to fund WIC. We risk the very real possibility that States will turn people away or, for the first time since the 1990s, waitlist eligible participants, an otherwise unthinkable scenario in the half century of this heretofore successful programs.

This letter describes the funding cliff that the WIC program faces in Colorado, yet the disastrous implications of this shortfall are emblematic of what will be felt across the nation if WIC isn't provided with needed Congressional support. Cutting funding for the program would be a surefire way to harm those most in need during a nutritionally vulnerable period of their lives. This is especially dire given rapidly growing WIC enrollment, combined with historically high food prices.

It is imperative that Congress fully fund WIC at a level that will service projected caseloads and avoid cuts to benefits, prevent waitlisting of eligible WIC applicants, and protect the fruit and vegetable benefits. We implore you to include sufficient resources in a short-term Continuing Resolution, and we call on Congress to fully fund WIC for fiscal year 2024 to sustain current benefits and increasing participation.

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<sup>4</sup> [Economic evaluation of California prenatal participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\) to prevent preterm birth | Prevention Medicine](#)

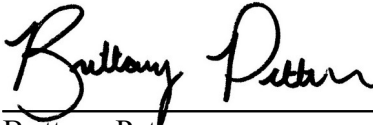
<sup>5</sup> [National and State Levels Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2019 | Food and Nutrition Services, United States Department of Agriculture](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Colorado WIC Data Dashboard | Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Colorado WIC Data Dashboard | Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Colorado WIC Data Dashboard | Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Hundreds of Thousands of Young Children and Postpartum Adults Would Be Turned Away from WIC under House and Senate Funding Levels | Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#)



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Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Yadira Caraveo M.D.  
Member of Congress



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Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress