



SUPPORT THE WISE INVESTMENT IN OUR CHILDREN (WIC) ACT

The Wise Investment in our Children (WIC) Act, sponsored by Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Susan Collins (R-ME), is common-sense legislation that would improve maternal and child health outcomes in the United States by expanding WIC eligibility for at-risk infants, children, and new mothers. For nearly 46 years, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has contributed to healthier pregnancies and improved birth outcomes for low-income women and infants and led to healthier growth and development for at-risk, low-income children up to age five. WIC has the potential to make an even greater impact should the WIC Act be adopted by making WIC more widely accessible to mothers and young children during key developmental periods.

HEALTHY CHILDREN

Giving states the option to extend WIC eligibility for children by one year—until their sixth birthday or their entry to kindergarten—would ensure that no children are slipping through the nutrition gap between WIC and the National School Lunch Program. The National Center for Education Statistics indicates that the majority of children start kindergarten after the age of five-and-a-half. This means many of these children could be facing six months or more without targeted nutrition support after aging out of WIC at their fifth birthday. WIC’s child food package and nutrition support is shown to increase diet quality and reduce childhood obesity. The WIC Act would make sure that all children who are income-qualified can make a seamless transition between WIC and school lunch, thereby leading to healthier diets and improved physical and cognitive health outcomes.

HOW THE WIC ACT WOULD STRENGTHEN WIC:

1. Extending eligibility for children up to age six
2. Extending certification periods for infants for two years instead of one
3. Extending eligibility for breastfeeding and postpartum mothers to two years

HEALTHY BABIES

Giving states the option to certify infants for two years instead of one year would allow WIC agencies to eliminate duplicative paperwork, save admin costs, and encourage families to keep their young children on WIC longer. Many WIC families tend to exit the program when an infant turns one, a period of significant change in the infant’s diet. WIC agencies should be focused on providing much-needed nutrition education, instead of replicating paperwork that has previously been completed. If infants could be certified for two years rather than one, more children would remain in the program past their first birthday and would be able to continue to benefit from WIC’s critical nutrition and public health services.

HEALTHY MOMS

Giving states the option to extend eligibility for breastfeeding and postpartum mothers to two years would help WIC to better meet the unique needs of postpartum women. Currently, WIC provides services to postpartum women up to six months after the birth of their baby and breastfeeding women for up to one year. While the provision of these

services during the postpartum period has helped to improve diets, increase breastfeeding rates, and increase access to healthcare and social services, WIC can have an even greater impact through expanded eligibility under the WIC Act. Medical professionals recognize that good maternal health prior to pregnancy is of vital importance to improving health outcomes for both mother and infant. The period between the birth of a woman’s child and until the birth of her next child, also known as the interconceptional period, is a critical opportunity to improve the health of mothers and outcomes for subsequent births, reducing the likelihood of costly conditions resulting from negative birth outcomes like preterm birth or low birthweight. WIC has a crucial role to play in ensuring that mothers are receiving the nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support, health screenings, and resource referrals that they need during the interconceptional period.

THE WIC ACT EMPOWERS STATES TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND ADDRESS CRITICAL NUTRITION GAPS. IT TRULY IS A WISE INVESTMENT IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICANS.