



SUPPORT THE MODERN WIC ACT (H.R. 2424/ S. 984)

The More Options to Develop and Enhance Remote Nutrition in WIC Act (MODERN WIC Act), sponsored by Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Roger Marshall (R-KS) and Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), is critical legislation that seeks to modernize WIC’s service delivery to build a stronger, more accessible program. Recognizing WIC’s record of success in improving maternal and child health, the MODERN WIC Act would thoughtfully balance remote options while preserving the program’s public health character.

REDUCING BARRIERS TO WIC ACCESS

In recent years, WIC has taken advantage of several opportunities to modernize service delivery. While WIC providers have been efficiently leveraging digital tools and online platforms for years to provide nutrition education and breastfeeding support, the more recent introduction of remote certification options have marked a significant shift in service delivery. In many cases, remote services ameliorated longstanding barriers to access, such as transportation, time off work, and arranging child-care.

After physical presence was required for WIC certification starting in 1998, WIC has never reached more than 65 percent of the eligible population. Children, in particular, phase off the program as recertifications are required each year. Short-term waiver authority has allowed USDA to pilot remote certification options, with WIC providers reporting a 15% increase nationwide in child participation between February 2020 and September 2023.

THE MODERN WIC ACT WOULD:

1. Relax physical presence requirements to allow for remote certifications, while preserving WIC’s health screenings
2. Allow for remote issuance of benefits on the e-WIC card
3. Invest in annual funding for WIC technology improvements

The MODERN WIC Act will update physical presence requirements to create permanent remote service options, maximizing participant flexibility and choice while facilitating efficient use of State and Local Agency resources. Currently waiver authority allows WIC to certify participants remotely, so long as they are able to complete related health assessments within 60 days of the remote appointment. In addition to addressing barriers to participation, this model presents renewed opportunity for WIC staff to proactively partner with healthcare to coordinate care and reduce duplicative tests. The MODERN WIC Act would codify these flexibilities while improving administrability.

MODERNIZING BENEFIT ISSUANCE

Congress must clarify that remote WIC benefit issuance is permitted, reducing in-person touchpoints to support sustained participation. With paper vouchers, families would come in to the clinic at least every three months to pick up benefits as part of a nutrition education touchpoint. With e-WIC rolled out nationwide, nearly all State Agencies have the capability to securely load new benefits to a participant’s EBT card while providing nutrition education over the phone. This step promotes convenience for participating families while assuring program integrity.

INVESTING IN WIC TECHNOLOGIES

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 provided \$35 million each year to support WIC Management Information Systems. This funding was especially critical as WIC adapted to roll out e-WIC. As the program innovates to incorporate remote certifications, a broader range of appointment options, and online shopping, consistent funding that supports a broader range of WIC projects related to technology is essential. The MODERN WIC Act would provide \$60 million each year to support WIC technology projects, including modifications to WIC Management Information Systems.

The MODERN WIC Act includes necessary reforms that will prepare WIC to serve a new generation of WIC families. WIC must provide families with a modern and accessible experience consistent with other healthcare settings.

