



August 18, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The National WIC Association (NWA) is pleased to make a commitment in support of the Administration and the nation in achieving the goals of the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health to end hunger and reduce diet-related diseases by 2030. We make this commitment under Pillar 2: Integrating Nutrition and Health, regularly referred to as Food as Medicine. Our commitments and work also support Pillar 1 to improve food access and Pillar 3 to empower people to make and have access to healthier choices.

**Summary:** Under Pillar 2, the National WIC Association makes a two-year commitment to support and enhance participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). WIC is the nation's largest and most effective food as medicine program, combining health and nutrition services with healthy food prescriptions for 50 years. The more people who participate, the more who experience the benefits from the program—improved maternal, infant, and child health; prenatal and birth outcomes; breastfeeding; diet quality; and access to healthy food. NWA commits to develop and carry out a WIC 50th Anniversary Communications Campaign to enhance the visibility and reputation of WIC to support program enrollment, reduce stigma associated with WIC, and increase awareness of the program and its benefits. NWA also will enhance WIC enrollment by updating [www.signupwic.com](http://www.signupwic.com), a national site created to facilitate the WIC application and enrollment process. Enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the WIC workforce is critical to supporting program retention and ensuring the highest quality of services are received by WIC participants. Additionally, NWA will 1) subgrant \$350,000 to WIC agencies to support WIC staff from underserved/underrepresented communities, such as Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian communities, to pursue nutrition and lactation credentials, and 2) cultivate Health Equity Champions and provide equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging training, with more 200 WIC staff completing and earning a WIC EDIB certificate.

**WIC: the Premier Food as Medicine Program:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) was one of the first food as medicine programs, before the term food as medicine was coined and the current national movement of integrating food and health care. WIC combines health and nutrition services with providing access to healthy food to effectively address food and nutrition security. WIC serves low-income families, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, with health screenings, nutrition and breastfeeding education and counseling, immunization screening, and referrals to health and social services. It also provides healthy food prescriptions—electronic benefits to purchase nutritious foods, like vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. Each food package is tailored to meet the needs, life stage, and nutrition gaps of participant groups.

Studies show that the services, education, breastfeeding support, and access to healthy food delivered by WIC providers result in healthcare cost savings; healthier, full-term pregnancies; greater likelihood of receiving early prenatal care; fewer preterm births and infant deaths; increased breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity; improved dietary outcomes for infants and children; reduced obesity in toddlers; enhanced maternal health; and improved cognitive development for participating children and helps children from low-income families enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

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A commitment for the National Strategy regarding WIC is particularly relevant as WIC was born out of the first White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health in 1969, convened by President Richard M. Nixon. One of the key recommendations of the first White House Conference was to strengthen nutrient intake for pregnant women and infants. In 1974, the first WIC clinic opened in Pineville, Kentucky. It paved the way for a nationwide program that has improved the lives of millions of families. The WIC program was scaled up nationwide, initially as a result of a bipartisan effort led by Senators Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and Bob Dole. A WIC commitment also is timely, as 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the WIC program.

**Our Commitment:** NWA commits to support and enhance WIC participation, both recruitment and retention – an effort we have historically engaged in through the provision of resources and technical assistance to our members. We will encourage families who are eligible for WIC to participate, increasing access to the well-established benefits of the program—improving maternal, infant, and child health; prenatal and birth outcomes; culturally responsive breastfeeding education and support; access to healthy food; and improved diet quality. We will leverage the 50th anniversary of WIC (in 2024) to elevate the visibility of critical challenges facing low-income women and children and ways that WIC addresses them. In addition, we will enhance WIC retention by continuing to make WIC services more reflective of the wide diversity of participants by strengthening and diversifying the WIC workforce and expanding training for WIC providers on equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

**50th Anniversary of WIC Campaign:** NWA commits to develop and carry out a 50th Anniversary Communications Campaign to enhance the visibility and reputation of WIC to support program enrollment, reduce stigma associated with WIC, and increase awareness of the program and its benefits. The campaign will inform low-income mothers who do not participate in WIC of the value of the program to them and their children; half of eligible people do not participate and miss out on the proven benefits of WIC. Greater program participation will improve nutrition, health, and access to healthy food.

We will develop high-impact messages and materials that NWA will widely disseminate and mobilize state and local WIC agencies, healthcare providers, community-based organizations that serve mothers and young children (such as grassroots organizations, daycare, health clinics, pediatrician and OB GYN offices, supermarkets), and partners to share through their direct-to-participant communications channels. Campaign materials will include high-impact videos featuring WIC participants, providers, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Themes will include program history, effectiveness, innovations over time, equity, maternal health, and breastfeeding. Outreach to low-income mothers will include social and traditional media, photos, graphics, infographics, live and virtual events, blog posts, and newsletter articles. We will collect and include stories and voices of people with lived experience that are relatable, impactful, and motivating to WIC-eligible, nonparticipating women.

**Facilitate WIC Enrollment:** NWA will update the national [www.signupwic.com](http://www.signupwic.com) site to enhance WIC enrollment. Families can find their local WIC agency to begin the WIC enrollment process at [www.signupwic.com](http://www.signupwic.com). We will seek WIC provider and participant input to redesign the website to better tailor it to the needs of families seeking to enroll in WIC, making it more user friendly, visually appealing, and informative. We will upgrade both the back and front ends of the site. Back-end updates will include improved analytics on the user experience and connecting the site to state pre-applications, where available. Front end improvements will include adding articles and videos for potential participants, such as information on eligibility, the benefits WIC provides, which foods are in the WIC benefit packages, breastfeeding, infant feeding, and other common questions potential participants have. This will provide education and searchable information for low-income women and better position WIC as a helpful resource. In addition, we will explore widgets to translate the site into additional languages; currently, [signupwic.com](http://signupwic.com) is available in English and Spanish.

### ***Enhance the Cultural Relevance of WIC Services***

**1) Diversify the WIC Workforce:** The strength of WIC depends on the strength of its workforce. The recruitment and retention of highly trained, skilled, respectful, participant-centered staff is critical to the WIC participant experience as they interact with staff at every stage of participation.

Enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the WIC workforce is critical to ensuring the highest quality of services are received by program participants. As the membership organization for WIC agencies and staff, NWA is uniquely positioned to strengthen and enhance the WIC workforce for long-term program success. NWA will create equitable opportunities for staff from under-represented groups to pursue credentialed positions, such as the Registered Dietitian (RD/RDN), International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLC), and Nutrition and Dietetics Technician Registered (NTDR) credentials. We will subgrant \$350,000 to WIC agencies to support WIC staff from historically marginalized, underrepresented groups to pursue RD, IBCLC, and NDTR credentials.

**2) Cultivating Health Equity Champions and providing equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) training to WIC providers.** NWA will build on our Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion (AHEAD) in WIC project to build equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging capacity within the larger WIC community. In 2021, we developed and pilot tested an EDIB curriculum. We are expanding EDIB competence and practice in WIC using a train-the-trainer approach. Health Equity Champions receive in-depth training for building core attitudes, skills, knowledge, competence, and guiding WIC staff to build EDIB into their roles, responsibilities, workplace, and program delivery. We pilot-tested this approach and our curriculum by training our first cohort of Health Equity Champions and sub-grantees and commit to training more HECs. HECs will offer the EDIB training to other state and local WIC staff through a Leadership Academy which can be replicated at the state and local level. NWA will launch the EDIB Leadership Academy through a guided curriculum and certificate program for WIC staff. In the next two years, more than 200 WIC staff will have completed equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging training and earn a WIC EDIB certificate. Staff who have successfully completed the training will utilize the concepts to develop and implement EDIB-focused strategies in their state and local agencies to improve service delivery and accessibility for WIC participants.

**Who We Are:** The National WIC Association's vision is a nation of healthier women, children, and their families. NWA is the education and advocacy non-profit membership organization supporting WIC program staff, clients, and partners. We lead the nation's largest grassroots effort of WIC partners who advocate for WIC at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure on-the-ground voices shape decision making and public policy. NWA has a strong track record of securing program improvements, increased investment and impact, and equitable policies for the families served by WIC and WIC providers.

NWA provides a forum through which state and local WIC providers share research, best practices, and lessons learned to strengthen their approach to serving over six million low-income infants, young children, and women. Our members provide education, resources, health and nutrition services, and family supports in over 12,000 communities and 85 states, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations. NWA centers health equity and participants' lived experience at all stages of our work, through priority setting, public policy, program development, materials and message design, implementation, and dissemination. WIC peer counselors come from the same communities as participating families, tapping into the skills and strengths of the community; reflecting cultural, familial, and community identities; and enhancing rapport with participants. For fifty years, the WIC provider community has been an active force in building nutrition security at the federal, state, and community level. We look forward to celebrating the 50th anniversary of WIC—a key public health milestone—in partnership with the Biden-Harris Administration and all WIC stakeholders to empower families, reduce disparities, and improve health, nutrition, and wellbeing across the nation.

Respectfully,



Kate Franken, MPH, RD  
Chair of the Board of Directors