

28 April 2015

Editor, The Wall Street Journal
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

To Whom It May Concern:

In "Makers of Baby Formula Press Their Case on WIC Program," (April 27) Mead Johnson (infant formula manufacturer) suggests there is a problem where there is none. What is clear, though, is that there are many missing pieces to this story.

First, Congressionally mandated, competitively bid, infant formula rebates or cost containment prevent infant formula manufacturers from gouging tax payers, generating \$1.8 billion in 2014 in non-tax revenue. This allows bi-partisan supported WIC (providing nutrition and breastfeeding counseling and healthy foods with key nutrients lacking in the diets of low-income mothers and young children to age five for over forty years) to serve one in five participants. Rebates have been relatively constant over time with the average annual rebate paid (1997-2013) increasing just 2.07% (less than the average annual U.S. inflation rate of 2.36% for the same period).

Second, the article neglects important context. The annual growth in WIC infant participation has been 0.8% (1997-2013) – hardly an unsustainable path – despite Mead Johnson's claim that "we see it as our duty to help put [WIC] on a sustainable path . . ." Breastfeeding – the globally preferred and recommended form of infant feeding – has steadily increased in WIC to 67% of infants 6-13 month olds and among non-WIC infants – threatening infant formula manufacturers' business model.

Third, while Medicaid eligibility thresholds do vary across states, WIC and Medicaid were linked by Congress in 1989 to assure mothers healthy pregnancies and the delivery of healthy babies, saving federal tax payers. The average first year medical costs for a premature/low birth-weight baby are \$49,033 compared to \$4,551 for a baby born without complications.

Fourth, essential business ingredients of this linkage assure clinic efficiency, simplified and streamlined paperwork, reduced administrative error, and reduced administrative costs – all saving federal tax payers critical resources.

Mead Johnson is hardly suffering for its WIC involvement. Annual net income has increased from \$453M in 2010 to \$720M in 2014, a whopping 59% increase. Mead's real concern in this fight seems to be about forcing otherwise legally qualified WIC mothers to pay full price for their infant formula products.

The **National WIC Association** is the education arm and advocacy voice of the over 8.3 million mothers and young children participating in WIC and the 12,200 WIC service provider agencies.

Sincerely,

National WIC Association

The Rev. Douglas A. Greenaway
President & CEO