



SUPPORT THE WIC FOR KIDS ACT (H.R. 4455)

The WIC for Kids Act, sponsored by Reps. Jahana Hayes (D-CT) and Jenniffer González-Colón (R-PR), seeks to improve health outcomes for young children by assuring sustained nutrition support through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC's documented record of improving dietary quality and reducing childhood obesity can be more effectively leveraged to grow a healthier next generation. The WIC for Kids Act would resolve administrative challenges to expand the program's public health impacts.

ONGOING NUTRITION SUPPORT FOR KIDS

WIC's targeted nutrition support is frustrated by duplicative program requirements to reapply for services each year. Before the pandemic, this recertification appointment inhibited ongoing participation, especially as in-person visits presented barriers such as transportation, time off work, and arranging childcare. Because of these barriers, WIC has never reached more than 65 percent of the eligible population.

COVID-related waivers demonstrate that flexible recertification can empower sustained participation, with a 9 percent increase in child participation since February 2020. WIC can balance new options with program integrity and the program's public health character by extending certification periods to two years. This step streamlines administrative requirements and removes burdens on families, ensuring that children can continue to receive WIC's effective nutrition supports.

THE WIC FOR KIDS ACT WOULD:

1. Remove paperwork burdens on families by extending child certification periods to two years
2. Promote efficiency by streamlining certification periods among family members
3. Coordinate across programs serving young children by extending adjunctive eligibility to Head Start, CHIP, and FDIPIR

EASIER ACCESS FOR FAMILIES

WIC participation is targeted to the individual's nutrient needs, meaning that application and certification is handled on a case-by-case basis. Recertification requirements are complicated further when a mother becomes pregnant again, a dynamic that leads to two family members being certified at different times. Statutory flexibilities can empower local agencies to more thoughtfully align certification periods across family members, including through automatic certification of infants born to WIC moms and counting income and other household proofs across multiple family members to reduce burden.

BUILDING NUTRITION SECURITY FOR KIDS

WIC's nutrition support operates in tandem with other critical programs that support the nutrition and health needs of young children. Since 1989, WIC has waived requiring proof of income if a participant can establish participation in Medicaid, SNAP, or TANF.

This process, known as adjunctive eligibility, reduces the time burden on families and is associated with administrative cost savings. Even though over three-quarters of WIC participants establish income eligibility through receipt of Medicaid, including other programs that serve young children can build cross-program partnerships that effectively connect young children with WIC's nutrition support.

WIC providers already partner on-the-ground with Head Start locations to conduct required health assessments, promoting program efficiency by meeting testing requirements for two programs at one appointment. These models can be enhanced if program rules are aligned to integrate other elements of the certification appointment.

The WIC For Kids Act is an important step forward in modernizing access to WIC and connecting young children with healthy foods and sustained nutrition support. These provisions will help grow a healthier next generation.

