

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Agriculture, Rural Development,  
Food and Drug Administration,  
and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Merkley,

We respectfully ask that you fully fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in the Fiscal Year 2017 Agriculture Appropriations bill, and assure the WIC contingency fund is maintained. Fully funding WIC ensures that no eligible applicants are turned away and that the program has funds to ensure timely and responsible program management.

WIC is the nation's premiere preventive public health nutrition program serving over 8 million low income mothers and young children at nutritional risk each month. Numerous studies show that participation in WIC saves money by improving birth outcomes and reducing pre-term and low birth weight babies. WIC improves the growth and development of more than 50 percent of all infants born and young children in the U.S by ensuring access to healthy and nutritious foods. Since 1997, Appropriators of both parties have recognized the great value WIC adds to the nation's nutritional health and have worked to ensure that WIC has sufficient funding to serve all eligible mothers and young children who apply.

We request that you provide the following set asides, which will ultimately contribute to increased program integrity and long-term deficit reduction:

- \$90 million in set aside funding for breastfeeding peer counselors and breastfeeding support services;
- \$75 million for management information systems (MIS) and for electronic service delivery systems (EBT) funding;
- \$6.02 million for enhanced fruit and vegetable cash value vouchers for fully breastfeeding women;
- \$26 million for program initiatives and evaluation; and
- \$14 million in infrastructure funding.

In addition to providing healthy foods, WIC provides critical health and social service referrals. As a result, children enrolled in WIC are more likely to be immunized on time, consume key nutrients, and have higher cognitive development scores than their peers not participating in

WIC. Breastfeeding rates among WIC women are at record highs—70 percent initiation and 23 percent at 6 months. Removing families from the program as a result of funding cuts deprives young children of access to healthy food, a healthy start in life, and the opportunity to thrive.

We strongly urge you to fully fund WIC in the FY17 Agriculture Appropriations bill to continue protecting low-income mothers, infants, and children from hunger and improve their ability to access nutritious, balanced diets. Thank you for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



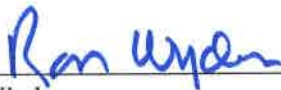
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



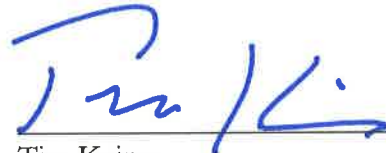
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



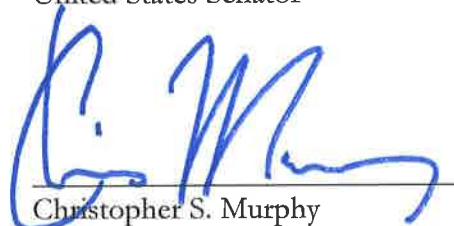
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



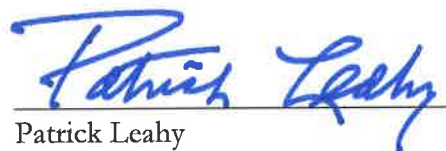
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



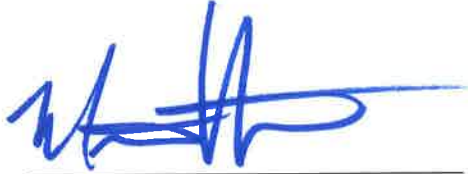
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United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



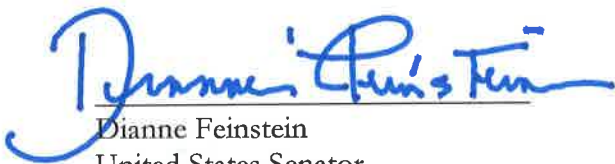
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



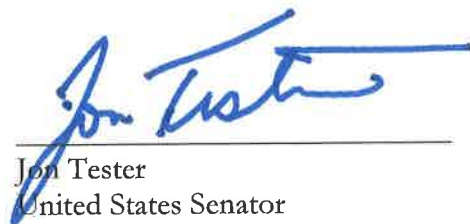
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Jon Tester  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator