

3 March 2005

The Hon. Judd Gregg, Chair  
Senate Committee on the Budget  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Kent Conrad, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on the Budget  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg & Sen. Conrad:

We write on behalf of the thousands of nationally recognized WIC health professionals, nutritionists and dietitians, members of the health care, public health, education, labor, hunger advocacy and faith based communities who are committed to addressing the nutrition and healthcare needs of WIC families. WIC – the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children – serves 8.0 million participants through 2,100 WIC local or community agencies in 10,000 WIC clinics each month. These centers are the front lines battling to improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable families.

We write to express our views on the President's Budget proposal for WIC.

President Bush has been consistent in his support for the WIC Program since the first year of his first term in office. His fiscal year 2006 Budget proposal for WIC continues that commitment. We applaud the President for his proposed increase in funding for WIC to \$5.51 billion and his commitment to restore the contingency reserve of \$125 million. We are likewise grateful for his proposal to obligate \$15 million in support of a breastfeeding support initiative to fund breastfeeding peer counselors.

**We are however, deeply concerned about proposed caps on domestic discretionary spending that will negatively impact WIC and other safety net programs through 2010, forcing WIC to turn potential participants away and the inclusion of a proposed cap of 25% on nutrition services and administration (NSA) funding in 2006.**

**We are extremely concerned about implied policy found in supplementary budget materials that the Office of Management and Budget has provided the House and Senate Budget Committees. These materials suggest \$658 million in future cuts to the WIC Program for the fiscal years 2007 through 2010. If the WIC program's share of the funding in its budget subfunction remains the same in 2010 as it would be under the President's budget proposal for 2006, some 670,000 fewer low-income women, infants, and children would be served. Given that one out of every two infants born in this country participates in WIC – demonstrating presenting need for WIC nutrition, health and food benefits -- without a significant gain in the standard and quality of life afforded to those who turn to WIC for help it is difficult to conceive of a time when WIC benefits might be so dramatically reduced. This implied policy suggests an abandonment of the nations' most vulnerable families.**

Nutrition services include nutrition education, obesity prevention efforts, breastfeeding support and promotion efforts, pre-natal and pediatric health care referrals and follow-up, spouse and child abuse referral, drug and alcohol counseling referral, immunization screening assessment and referral and a host of other client benefits. *Simply put, the President's proposal to cap nutrition services and administration funding, NSA, represents a significant benefit cut to WIC participants.*

It takes NSA resources to distribute WIC food packages. **The President's proposed cap on WIC NSA funding will result in unspent WIC food resources and unmet participant needs.** We cannot imagine that the President intends this result when he is so committed to ensuring that WIC receives additional overall Program funding.

**The net result of the President's proposal to cap nutrition services and administrative funding, NSA, would be to harm the Program and to erode benefits and services for participants.**

**We urge you not to adopt the proposed 5-year caps delineated in the President's Budget and eliminate the proposed cap on NSA.**

If we may be of further assistance to you in this matter or answer any additional questions you may have regarding these funding issues, please feel free to contact Douglas A. Greenaway on 202.232.5492.

Yours respectfully,

Academy for Educational Development

America's Second Harvest

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Dietetic Association

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

Association of State & Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO)

Bread for the World

Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre & Greater Miami Valley (Dayton OH) Breastfeeding Coalition

Childrens Defense Fund

Coalition for Improving Maternity Services (CIMS)

Episcopal Church, USA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Human Milk Banking Association of North America

Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee

International Lactation Consultants Association (ILCA)

LaCTo -Lactation Consultants Together of Southern New Jersey

Laleche League International

Massachusetts Food Association

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Education Association

National Immigration Law Center

National Recreation and Park Association

National WIC Association

NETWORK

New Jersey Breastfeeding Task Force

New Jersey Area Health Education Center

North Dakota Dietetic Association

New York City Coalition Against Hunger

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office

RESULTS

School Nutrition Association

Society for Nutrition Education (SNE)

The Coalition on Human Needs

Volunteers of America

Wisconsin Public Health Association