

**FRIENDS OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
c/o National WIC Association**

November 4, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
304 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
1026 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairwoman Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of increasing the Fiscal Year 2020 funding levels for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program to its fully authorized amount of \$90 million, as included in the Agriculture/FDA appropriations bill passed by the House of Representatives on June 25, 2019. On October 31, 2019, the Senate advanced a Senate Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture/FDA Appropriations bill that allocated only \$80 million to this critical set-aside. **We urge conferees to adopt the House funding level of \$90 million.**

Breastfeeding promotion and support is a core element of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program, first authorized in 2004 and expanded in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, plays a pivotal role in advancing this mission, providing peer-to-peer support for breastfeeding mothers. The Peer Counselor Program is a proven success, with research demonstrating that peer support improves breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity among WIC mothers. The program also creates jobs in communities across the country and empowers low-income women to pursue careers in lactation consulting or healthcare.

Both chambers have acted wisely to increase funding for this effective breastfeeding support, but the fully authorized amount of \$90 million is needed to meet a program goal of providing peer counselor services in every local agency. Only 53% of pregnant and postpartum women are enrolled in peer counseling and over 30% of local agencies do not have access to a peer counselor at all. Despite this demonstrated need, the Peer Counselor Program has not received a funding increase in nearly a decade, and some states have had to reduce their services as fixed costs increase with inflation.

Funding the Peer Counselor Program at \$90 million will not require additional investment in WIC's overall appropriation or a reduction of the rescission included in both the House and Senate bills. Likewise, funding the Peer Counselor Program at \$90 million will not inhibit WIC's ability to serve current caseload with a total of \$6 billion in FY 2020 funding.

We applaud the decision of both chambers to strengthen the investment in WIC's breastfeeding support and collectively urge conferees to adopt the House funding level of \$90 million in the final FY 2020 Agriculture/FDA Appropriations Bill, finally recognizing the full amount authorized under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

1,000 Days

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Advocates for Better Children's Diets

American Academy of Nursing

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Breastfeeding Institute

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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

American Heart Association

American Public Health Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses

Black Mothers Breastfeeding Association

Bread for the World

Child Care Aware® of America

Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association

Children's Health Fund

Children's HealthWatch

Coalition on Human Needs

Coffective, LLC

First Focus Campaign for Children

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBCLE)

La Leche League Alliance for Breastfeeding Education

La Leche League USA

March of Dimes

Mom2Mom Global

MomsRising

National Alliance for Breastfeeding Advocacy

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of Professional and Peer Lactation Supporters of Color

National WIC Association

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Nurse-Family Partnership

Pettaway Pursuit Foundation

Reaching Our Sisters Everywhere

RESULTS

Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior

Trust for America's Health

U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

ZERO TO THREE

Regional and State Organizations

Alabama Breastfeeding Committee
Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition
Appalachian Breastfeeding Network
Arkansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Arizona Breastfeeding Coalition
Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware
California Breastfeeding Coalition
California WIC Association
Coalition of Oklahoma Breastfeeding Advocates
Healthy and Free Tennessee
Indiana Breastfeeding Coalition
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Kentuckiana Lactation Improvement Coalition
Lactation Improvement Network of Kentucky (LINK)
Maine State Breastfeeding Coalition
Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition
Massachusetts WIC Directors Association
Michigan Breastfeeding Network
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan WIC Association
Minnesota Breastfeeding Coalition
Missouri Breastfeeding Coalition
Missouri WIC Association
Montana Association of WIC Agencies
Nebraska WIC Association
New Hampshire Breastfeeding Task Force
New Jersey Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.
New Mexico Breastfeeding Task Force
New York Statewide Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.
Nutrition First
Ohio Breastfeeding Alliance
Pennsylvania Breastfeeding Coalition
Pennsylvania WIC Association
Texas Association of Local WIC Directors (TALWD)
Vermont Breastfeeding Network
Vermont Lactation Consultant Association, Inc.
Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition
Utah WIC Association
WIC Association of New York State, Inc.

Additional State or Local Stakeholders

Acadiana Breastfeeding Coalition
Adagio Health
Allegheny County Breastfeeding Coalition
Aquarian Hands Life Services
Baby Whisperer Lactation Consultants
Balanced Wellness
BASHbyBri

Be Empowered Doula
Being Born
Birth & Beyond, Inc.
Birth In Color RVA
Birth Your Way
Black Families Do Breastfeed
Boho Wellness, LLC
Bold Selah LLC
Breastfeeding Center of Pittsburgh
BreastfeedLA
Brown Baby Brigade, Inc.
Ceremonia Birth and Healing
Chaffee County Breastfeeding Coalition
CHOICES
Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE)
Dallas Area Breastfeeding Alliance
Dallas Lactation Consultant Association
Foundation for Breastfeeding
Forever Moments Keepsakes
Gallo Birth Services
HealthConnect One
Healthy Children Project, Inc.
Heart + Bloom Birth and Wellness Services
Heart of Texas Breastfeeding Coalition
Hey Mama Lactation and Perinatal Care
Homeless Prenatal Program
Impeccable Touch, LLC
Lactation Love
Liberation Center for Women
Love & Soul Doulas
Luminous Postpartum, LLC
Kai's Butterflies
Maame LLC, Inc.
MadeWithLoveFL
Mammissi Birth Services
Maternal and Family Health Services
Metro Detroit/Wayne County Breastfeeding Coalition
Milk + Honey Co.
MilkWorks Nonprofit Breastfeeding Support Center
Move, Learn, Play
Nemours/Alfred I. DuPont Hospital for Children
Options in Childbirth
Pause Breathe Connect
Peaceful Transition
Precious Jewels Moms Ministries
Pretty Mama Breastfeeding LLC
Prism Birth Services
RosesHands
San Antonio Breastfeeding Coalition
Sankofa Lactation & Birthing Services
So-Full Lactation Services

Spectrum Warriors, Inc.
Summit Medical Group
Tarrant County Breastfeeding Coalition
Tri-County Breastfeeding Coalition
Tri-County Health Department
Triangle Health Educators
Twisted Faces LLC
VB Maternity Wellness LLC
Vital Village Network Boston Breastfeeding Coalition
Urban Health Plan, Inc.
Wells Kids
Woman's Choice Charitable Association
Women-Inspired Systems Enrichment
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network

cc: The Honorable John Hoeven
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Sanford Bishop
The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry