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September 30, 2025

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write regarding the devastating impacts of a government shutdown on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department) to do everything in its power to mitigate the harms to families across the country.

As you know, the WIC program provides critical services to 500,000 pregnant women and nearly 40 percent of all infants in the United States each year.¹ Furthermore, the program dispenses healthy science-based food benefits to 6.7 million participants, including postpartum and breastfeeding women, each month.² The WIC program serves as a lifeline for families; the program's caseload increased by 5 percent in Fiscal Year 2023 from 6.4 million participants to 6.7 million, underscoring the need to fully fund the program each year without delay or uncertainty.³ The program is instrumental in improving access to nutritious food among low-income families, promoting breastfeeding, and ensuring mothers, infants, and young children can access health care and social services.

Regrettably, as the federal government enters a shutdown, states will experience delays in funding for WIC, putting low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children at risk. If funding is disrupted, states may be forced to discontinue services for program participants amidst the uncertainty of federal funding. During the Fiscal Year 2014 government shutdown, states relied on their general funds to continue WIC services and were then reimbursed with federal funds once the shutdown was over; however, there is uncertainty over whether the federal government would take the same action this time.⁴ An immediate public

¹ *The State of WIC: Celebrating 50 Years of Impact*, National WIC Association (Sept. 2024), <https://media.nwica.org/state%20of%20wic%20report%202025.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *The Administration and State Officials Should Take Steps to Keep WIC Operating During a Partial Government Shutdown*, Ctr. On Budget and Pol'y Priorities (Sept. 29, 2025), <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/the-administration-and-state-officials-should-take-steps-to-keep-wic-operating-during-a>.

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commitment from the Department to promptly replenish state funds once the shutdown is over would help alleviate state fiscal concerns and perhaps deter states from discontinuing funding during the shutdown.

We request specific information on how USDA is planning to mitigate these nationwide implications. Specifically, we request answers to the following questions:

- 1) Is funding available for states, either through the \$150 million contingency fund or unspent funds, to sustain WIC services during a government shutdown?
 - a. If so, when will that funding be available and for what duration of time will that funding remain available?
 - b. If so, when does USDA intend to make such funding available?
- 2) What action is USDA taking to minimize uncertainty for states and families?
 - a. Will shutdown-specific guidance be provided to states and if so, when?
 - b. How will any updates be communicated to states and program recipients in a timely fashion?
- 3) Will the Department commit to publicly assuring states that if state funding is used to continue operating WIC, those funds would be replenished by the federal government once the government shutdown has concluded?
 - a. If so, when does the Department plan to communicate this assurance to states?

Please send all official correspondence and information related to this request to the Committee's Democratic staff at EWDOversight@mail.house.gov as soon as possible. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member



SUZANNE BONAMICI
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education

cc: The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, Committee on Education and Workforce
The Honorable Kevin Kiley, Chairman, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary,
and Secondary Education