

August 13, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
House Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
House Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Frelinghuysen and Aderholt, and Ranking Members Lowey and Bishop:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of the Senate's Fiscal Year 2019 appropriation of \$67.5 million for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program. This funding level represents a \$7.5 million, or approximately 15%, increase in funding for the program. Despite being a critical and effective breastfeeding support shown to increase the rate of both initiation<sup>i,ii</sup> and duration<sup>iii</sup> of breastfeeding, the WIC breastfeeding peer counselor program does not receive adequate appropriations to reach all eligible WIC moms. As a result, an average of only 53% of pregnant and postpartum participants are enrolled in peer counseling.

With additional funding, we can ensure that more WIC moms are able to access this vital service. For moms like Kendra Bentley of North Carolina, the WIC breastfeeding peer counselor program can make the difference between continuing to breastfeed and having to give up when challenges arise. Kendra reports that the program helped her to meet her breastfeeding goals, despite initially low milk production as a result of previous breast surgery, and her daughter being born with a tongue tie. "I would not be the breastfeeding mama and donor milk advocate I am today without the support WIC provided to me during the most challenging time in my life," says Kendra.

Moms and babies like Kendra and her daughter, Charlotte, are counting on you to support this important public health program. We ask you to maintain the Senate funding level of \$67.5 million for the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program in your FY 2019 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days  
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Advocates for Better Children's Diets  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Heart Association  
American Public Health Association  
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Bread for the World  
Child Care Aware® of America  
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York

Coalition on Human Needs  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
March of Dimes  
MomsRising  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National WIC Association  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Public Advocacy for Kids  
Trust for America's Health  
ZERO TO THREE

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<sup>i</sup> Gross S, Resnick A, Cross-Barnet C, Nanda JP, Augustyn M, Paige DM. (2009). The differential impact of WIC Peer Counseling programs on breastfeeding initiation across the state of Maryland. *Journal of Human Lactation*; Vol. 26:4: 435-43.

<sup>ii</sup> Yun S, Lui Q, Mertzlufft K, Krusse C, White M, Fuller P, Zhu BP (2010) et al. Evaluation of the Missouri WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) Breastfeeding Peer Counselling Programme. *Public Health Nutrition*; Vol. 13:2:229-37.

<sup>iii</sup> Kistin N, Abrahamson R, Dublin P (1994) Effects of peer counselors on breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity, and duration among low-income urban women. *Journal of Human Lactation*; Vol. 10:11- 15.