



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 506/Senate Bill 970:  
Maryland Department of Health -  
Special Supplement Nutritional Program for Women, Infants, and Children  
- Reports  
Senate Budget and Tax Committee March 20, 2019**

Maryland Hunger Solutions, a statewide nonprofit working to end hunger in Maryland, is in support of House Bill 506/Senate Bill 970, which would require the Maryland Department of Health to submit reports regarding the participation trends and barriers to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to the General Assembly each year until 2022.

Time and time again, studies have confirmed the multitude of benefits of WIC to the health and well-being of low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up until the age of 5. Not only does participation in WIC improve birth outcomes, it improves infant feeding practices, overall childhood nutrition, and cognitive development; all of which affect the trajectory of life far beyond the years of WIC support.<sup>i</sup> The nutritional assistance that WIC provides is crucial in ensuring that children have the nutrition they need to grow and thrive during their most significant years of development.

Unfortunately, despite the benefits of the program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reported a concerning decline in WIC participation in the recent years.<sup>ii</sup> This bill would help to track the participation trends in WIC with the aim of better understanding the barriers to participation and developing effective strategies for improving the program's reach in the future. These are laudable goals; therefore, Maryland Hunger Solution urges a favorable report on HB506/SB970 in order to monitor and expand participation in this essential nutrition program.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). About WIC-How WIC Helps. Found at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-how-wic-helps>. Accessed on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support. National- and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligibles and

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Program Reach in 2014, and Updated Estimates for 2005–2013, by Paul Johnson, David Betson, Lorraine Blatt, and Linda Giannarelli. Project Officer: Grant Lovellette. Alexandria, VA: September 2017.