



"Cultivating a collaborative, sustainable, and equitable food system for all Maryland communities."

February 29, 2024

Andrew P. Harris, M.D.
1536 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Steny H. Hoyer
1705 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger III
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

David Trone
2404 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

John P. Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Kweisi Mfume
2263 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Glenn F. Ivey
1529 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Jamie Raskin
2242 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Harris, Ruppertsberger, Sarbanes, Ivey, Hoyer, Trone, Mfume and Raskin,

This letter is submitted by the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council, a body created by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session. Comprised of 33 council members from various regions of the state, each bringing unique perspectives and expertise to the table, our mission is to enhance the resilience of our food system and tackle the pressing issue of food insecurity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the key mandates of this Council is to develop equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of Maryland's food system. One way this could be achieved is by ensuring adequate funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in fiscal year 2024.

As Congress grapples with providing the additional funding needed to sustain WIC's operations, it is imperative to consider the significant impact that inadequate funding would have on the most vulnerable members of our society. Good nutrition during early childhood is crucial for proper growth and development, and any disruptions to WIC services could have lasting effects on the health of these vulnerable populations in our state.

A funding shortfall of approximately \$1 billion in 2024 would force states to implement deep cuts to WIC participation, resulting in an estimated 36,000 young children and women in Maryland being denied essential nutrition assistance in 2024 (according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). As a result, many families in Maryland are at risk of losing access to vital nutrition assistance that is critical for their health and well-being. This is the first time in thirty



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years that WIC will not be able to serve all eligible families who apply. The consequences of inadequate WIC funding extend beyond the immediate impact on eligible individuals.

Furthermore, failing to provide adequate funding for WIC would undermine the progress made in increasing participation rates and connecting more low-income families with the program's benefits. A lack of funding would create a perception of unavailability, potentially discouraging eligible families from applying for assistance in the future.

Investing in WIC not only safeguards the health and well-being of over 210,000 eligible Marylanders (according to the US Department of Agriculture), but also upholds the program's effectiveness and positive impact on children's health and development. By prioritizing the adequate funding of WIC, Congress can help improve the health outcomes of women, infants, and children in Maryland and promote a brighter future for our state.

We urge you to play a leadership role in ensuring adequate WIC funding in FY 2024. Thank you for your dedication to serving the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Maryland Food System Resiliency Council