



March 17, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Chair
Subcommittee on Health

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health

Dear Chair Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chair Eshoo, and Ranking Member Guthrie:

On behalf of the National WIC Association, the 12,000 service provider agencies we represent, and the approximately 6.25 million women, infants, and young children our members serve, we write to express our strong support for H.R. 265, the Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act. Especially as the nation grapples with ongoing crises of maternal and infant mortality, eligible families living in the U.S. territories should have equivalent access to Medicaid services to assure optimal health, especially during pregnancy, postpartum periods, infancy, and early childhood.

WIC's nutrition assistance and counseling is tailored to improve pregnancy, birth, and child health outcomes. As part of WIC's client services, WIC providers work to ensure that participating families have access to healthcare services – largely provided to low-income populations through Medicaid. Prenatal support provided jointly through WIC and Medicaid is instrumental at reducing preterm births, low birthweights, and other complications that could lead to significant first-year and life-long medical costs. WIC participation, especially when complemented by Medicaid coverage, reduces the likelihood of infant mortality by as much as 33 percent.

Five U.S. territories – American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands – are organized as State WIC Agencies, serving over 132,000 individuals each year and operating at an equal level with geographic states, the District of Columbia, and 33 Indian Tribal Organizations. This structure empowers all 89 State WIC Agencies to deliver effective supports to families expecting or raising young children. WIC services provided by territorial agencies has been especially critical at making healthy foods more affordable, supporting healthier outcomes for pregnancies and infants, and reducing childhood obesity rates.

Medicaid should adopt a similar model to ensure that eligible families living in the U.S. territories have access to quality healthcare. The Insular Area Medicaid Parity Act is a significant step forward in strengthening territorial healthcare infrastructure and enhancing the level of care that families can obtain to ensure optimal health outcomes. We thank the Subcommittee for its leadership in considering this much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,
The National WIC Association

Berry Kelly
South Carolina
Chair

Sarah Flores-Sievers
New Mexico
Chair-Elect

Beth Beachy
Illinois
Chair Emeritus

Meaghan Sutherland
Massachusetts
Secretary

Melinda Morris
Colorado
Treasurer

Rev. Douglas A. Greenaway
Washington, DC
President & CEO