

## An offering of Letters

As Catholics, we are called to give of our time, talent, and treasure for a greater purpose. The Diocesan Social Action Office invite you to use your voice to help end hunger. By participating in An Offering of Letters, you will support domestic and international nutrition programs vital to the health and survival of families and children. Your letters matter; combined with others across our diocese and the country, it is an expression of faith and hope, urging our legislators to work towards preventing and ending hunger. Please print the letters for our congressmen and senators and fill them out and drop them in the containers provided at main and side entrances of the Church by March 31, 2025. DSAO will pick them up. Our congressmen and senators are: Congressmen Bob Latta and Max Miller and Senators Bernie Moreno and Jon Husted. Thank you.

# WIC Helps Infants and Toddlers Get Off to a Healthy Start

**More than one in five U.S. children are at risk of hunger - but it doesn't have to be this way. Bread for the World's *Nourish Our Future* campaign urges our government to use its power and resources to make a historic impact on child hunger.**

**The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children – better known as WIC – is the premier U.S. public health nutrition program for pregnant women, mothers, and children up to age 5.** In 2023 (the last year for which there is data), the program served nearly 7 million participants per month, including almost 40 percent of all infants in the United States.

Most WIC participants live below the poverty line, which, for a family of three in 2024, is \$25,820. WIC enables families to purchase additional nutritious foods and provides health care referrals and information on healthy eating.

In 1967, Senator Robert F. Kennedy made a famous fact-finding trip to one of the poorest regions of the country, the Mississippi Delta. He brought along an entourage of reporters and photographers. One of the most searing images from that visit was of Kennedy cradling a listless toddler, a child he could not coax into responding to him. Families, healthcare providers, and aid workers in the poorest parts of the world would recognize this child's condition as severe malnutrition.

**Infants and toddlers with severe malnutrition are nowhere to be found in the U.S. today. This progress is largely due to WIC.** WIC was launched as a pilot project in 1972, and it became a permanent program in 1975. Today, it is the nation's third largest nutrition program, behind the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the National School Lunch Program.

One of Bread for the World's first actions addressing domestic hunger was to help secure an expansion of WIC in 1978. It was the first of many Bread efforts to strengthen WIC and ensure that members of Congress recognized its value.

## **WIC's contributions to public health cannot be overstated:<sup>1</sup>**

- WIC provides participating pregnant women with prenatal health care.
- WIC improves the dietary intake of pregnant and postpartum women.


- WIC has been shown to improve breastfeeding rates.
- WIC reduces the rates of low birthweight and premature birth.
- WIC reduces stillbirth and infant mortality.
- WIC improves the growth of nutritionally at-risk infants and children.
- WIC boosts children's intellectual development and helps them get ready to start school.
- WIC's nutrition education has been shown to increase the consumption of healthy foods.

WIC is a worthwhile investment, not only in the health and well-being of participating families, but in the health of our nation. It contributes to immense savings in health care that benefit society at large. Every dollar invested in WIC saves at least \$2.48 in medical, educational, and productivity costs.

WIC has typically enjoyed broad bipartisan support. But this is not something that can be taken for granted. The stakes are high. If Congress fails to appropriate enough funding for the program to meet rising demand, families could be turned away for the first time in decades. In their efforts to cut federal spending, some members of Congress have opposed funding WIC at the level needed to serve all eligible applicants.

Along with a bipartisan commitment to full funding, it is also vital that Congress reduce barriers and improve access to WIC by providing electronic and telehealth options so that families can become certified and recertified for the program, conduct appointments, and receive benefit payments without burdensome in-person visits.

### **As Bread for the World celebrates 50 years of WIC— and our own 50th anniversary—we are urging Congress to:**

- 1** Recommit to fully funding WIC now and in the future, so that all who apply and are eligible have access.
- 2** Strengthen the program through reforms that make it easier for families to enroll in WIC and access its vital assistance. 

**Endnotes:**

<https://media.nwica.org/proven-outcomes.pdf>

NOURISHING OUR FUTURE:

# Why Global Nutrition Needs Robust Funding

**Soaring rates of severe malnutrition and famine make it clear that we need to ensure robust funding for global nutrition.**

Good nutrition is the bedrock for a healthy and impactful life. Without it, children, families, and communities face significant challenges: disruptions to physical, mental, and emotional development; lost productivity; strain on healthcare systems; and instability.

UNICEF estimates that almost 45 million children under the age of 5 suffer from wasting (a condition whereby a child is severely thin for their height due to poor nutrition).<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of all preventable deaths among children under five are attributed to malnutrition. And yet, we are only able to reach roughly 25 percent of children suffering from the most dangerous form of malnutrition.<sup>2</sup>

Despite progress over the past few decades, the world continues to lose more than two million young children to malnutrition every year.<sup>3</sup>

Most people living with malnutrition are concentrated in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Central America. The causes of malnutrition and food insecurity are often rooted in and amplified by conflict and political instability, rising food prices, climate impacts, and the aftermath of COVID-19.

**Bread for the World and its partners are asking Congress to provide robust funding for global nutrition in the federal budget.**

Sadia, a mother in Tuvuu, Ghana who received support from USAID-trained health care workers for nutrition, said:

**“I now know the local ingredients that I need to add to the child’s food and fruits to help her recover from malnutrition. I add turkey berries, bean seeds, bean leaves, and jute leaves to the meat and fish to prepare stews and soups for the child. I can see that she is growing well now.”**

## In 2023, USAID nutrition programs reached more than 39 million women and children globally with critical nutrition interventions, including:

- 28 million children with nutrition programs
- 11 million women with counseling on maternal and child nutrition and micronutrient supplementation
- 6 million infants and young children through nutrition education, resources, and programs provided to families and caregivers
- 256,000 people with professional nutrition training and skills development to deliver nutrition-related interventions

But the need is far greater. By robustly funding global nutrition programs, we can reach more women and children with evidence-based and highly effective treatment that saves lives and provides a brighter future for children and families.

### Every \$1 invested in nutrition results in up to \$35 in economic returns.<sup>4</sup>

Better nutrition for children and women will enable countries to improve the health of their populations, send more children to school, and strengthen their economies.

For a tiny fraction—less than 1 percent—of the federal budget, global nutrition programs reach millions of children and mothers with lifesaving aid. These programs also support U.S. strategic interests by building and maintaining relationships with partner countries and promoting regional stability. —

In 2022, Congress passed the **Global Malnutrition Prevention and Treatment Act (GMPTA)** with strong bipartisan support. GMPTA makes existing U.S. global nutrition programs more effective and supports countries in their efforts to prevent and treat child and maternal malnutrition. Bread for the World and its members were instrumental in both the development and passage of the GMPTA.

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/child-health-and-survival/transforming-lives-treatment-malnutrition>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/speeches/dec-11-2024-deputy-administrator-isobel-coleman-usaids-wasting-research-consultation-event>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/half-child-deaths-linked-malnutrition>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/global-health/health-areas/nutrition>

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_,

As your constituent and a concerned Catholic, I am writing to express my concerns for the needs of poor and hungry people in the United States and around the world. I urge you to address the critical work of ending hunger at home and abroad. Indeed, the legislation related to food, including the farm bill, and USAID funding, impacts millions of our brothers and sisters.

As Congress works to renew our food and farm programs, I urge you to support legislation that builds healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

Specifically, I ask you to:

- Protect SNAP from funding cuts and further restrictions.
- Reauthorize the Food for Peace global nutrition program at no less than its current level of \$2.5 billion annually and allow additional flexibility to provide the most effective form of assistance in each local context.
- Fully fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and strengthen the program so that more eligible families are able to enroll and stay enrolled
- Provide robust funding for global nutrition programs through USAID, so that we can reach millions of children with lifesaving assistance.

WIC serves almost 40 percent of all infants born in the United States. Participation in WIC is associated with reduced risk of premature birth, low birth weight, and infant mortality. Globally, almost half of all deaths of children under 5 are attributable to malnutrition. These programs save lives by protecting the most vulnerable amongst us.

As a person of faith, I am called to raise my voice for people experiencing hunger and poverty – no matter where they live. This is why I urge you to support legislation that builds healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems.

Sincerely,

Name(print)

Address:

US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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