

PROTECT ACCESS TO WIC



A Cornerstone of New York State's Commitment to Maternal and Child Health

WIC is our nation's original Food Is Medicine program - and one of our most effective public health and food security investments.

WIC provides nutrition education, tailored food packages, breastfeeding support, and referrals to pregnant and postpartum people and children under age five. Decades of research show WIC improves birth outcomes, maternal health, childhood nutrition and developmental outcomes, and reduces disparities in infant health.

WIC Strengthens Local Economies

Beyond the many positive health impacts, WIC is also an important economic driver, funneling federal funds into New York's local economies. NYS WIC participants purchased over **\$540 million in WIC approved foods in FY2025**. That equals nearly \$1.5 million per day spent at WIC-authorized retailers - grocery stores, pharmacies, and farmers' markets - supporting local economies across the state. Further, every \$1 invested in WIC yields \$2.48 in savings in medical, educational, and productivity costs (National WIC Association, 2019).

Participation Has Grown over 25%

85 local WIC agencies including hospitals, community health centers, local health departments, and community-based organizations serve families statewide. Over 462,000 New Yorkers currently participate, the highest level since the Great Recession. **Since early 2020, NYS WIC participation has grown by more than 100,000 people, nearly a 28% increase, compared to 10% nationally.** New York serves ~68% of eligible residents, and demand is expected to continue rising.

Funding Has Not Kept Pace

NYS WIC funding for 2023–2028 supports 443,000 participants; caseloads exceeded this level in early 2024, leaving local WIC agencies underfunded to meet demand. **Since 2022, the participants-to-qualified nutritionist ratio has grown 24% (now 656 to 1), while funding to support community-based health professionals has remained largely flat.** This imbalance has led to insufficient time to conduct thorough nutritional assessments and follow-up, impacted the quality of services, increased staff burnout and more sustained vacancies, and strained a program proven to improve maternal and child health outcomes.

\$30 Million in State Supplemental Funds Will:

- Stabilize local operations so WIC can serve all eligible families seeking services.
- Sustain recent modernizations that improved efficiency and access.
- Support systemic outreach to connect WIC to the 200,000 eligible but unenrolled.

WHY NOW?

As New York faces unprecedented federal cuts to SNAP and Medicaid, WIC remains a stable source of nutrition and public health support - but only if families can access the program when they need it. A state investment in WIC ensures New York maximizes this proven federal program to protect the health, food security, and future of our youngest New Yorkers and their families.