

# CHILD NUTRITION REAUTHORIZATION

## POSITION STATEMENT

The 21 Tribes of the Inter Tribal Association of Arizona (ITAA) urge the passage of Child Nutrition Reauthorization to modernize child nutrition programs including WIC and school meals to meet current needs. Reauthorization should include provisions such as those in the *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*, advanced by the House Education and Labor Committee in August 2022.

## KEY POINTS



**Create a pilot program** for 10 Tribal authorities to operate the federal child nutrition programs as state agencies for five years to support tribal self-determination.



**Allow online and mobile payments** for WIC to modernize systems.



**Extend WIC eligibility for children until their sixth birthday** or when they begin kindergarten, to ensure there no nutrition gap between WIC and school lunch.



**Extend WIC eligibility for postpartum women to two years** which is a critical time to improve the health of mothers and outcomes for subsequent births.



**Allow remote certification options and extend certification periods to two years** for WIC to improve access to services.



## BACKGROUND

WIC is the nation's premier public health nutrition program serving 6.9 million mothers and young children including more than 10,000 American Indians in Arizona. WIC more than doubles its return on investment, saving \$2.48 in healthcare costs for every dollar spent on WIC services. WIC is funded under the Agricultural Appropriations and authorized under the Child Nutrition Act and Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.

## Child Nutrition Reauthorization

### Position Statement

The 21 Tribes of the Inter Tribal Association of Arizona (ITAA) urge passage of Child Nutrition Reauthorization prior to the end of the year to modernize child nutrition programs including WIC and school meals to meet current needs. Reauthorization should include provisions such as those in the *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*, advanced by the House Education and Labor Committee in August 2022. This act constitutes one of the most comprehensive legislative efforts to improve access to healthy foods for young children in at least five years, incorporating provisions of bipartisan bills that have been proposed in past years.

### Key Points

- Create a pilot program for 10 Tribal authorities to operate the federal child nutrition programs as state agencies for five years to support tribal self-determination.
- Give USDA waiver authority during federally declared emergencies so the agency has the ability to quickly respond to program needs rather than having to wait for enactment from Congress as experienced during the pandemic.
- Allow online and mobile payments for WIC and provide funds to support retailers, particularly small businesses, to modernize systems.
- Extend WIC eligibility for children until their sixth birthday or when they begin kindergarten to ensure that no children slip through the nutrition gap between WIC and school lunch.
- Extend WIC eligibility for postpartum women to two years to take advantage of the period between the birth of a woman's child until the birth of her next child, which has been shown to be a critical time to improve the health of mothers and outcomes for subsequent births.
- Allow remote certification options and extend certification periods to two years for WIC to reduce barriers to participation in the program and improve access to services.

### Background

WIC and other child nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program, have not been reauthorized in more than a decade. The House Education and Labor Committee advanced the *Healthy Meals, Healthy Kids Act*, which incorporates common-sense proposals that will enhance WIC's public health services. These core program expansions and improvements are included in three bipartisan bills introduced in the Senate - the Wise Investment in our Children Act (S. 853), the MODERN WIC Act (S. 3226), and the WIC Healthy Beginnings Act (S. 3216). WIC is the nation's premier public health nutrition program serving 6.9 million mothers and young children including more than 10,000 American Indians in Arizona. WIC more than doubles its return on investment, saving \$2.48 in healthcare costs for every dollar spent on WIC services. WIC is funded under the Agricultural Appropriations and authorized under the Child Nutrition Act and Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act.