

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop Jr.  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 201515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
1001 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

We write to express our strong support for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and to ask that, as you consider the Fiscal Year 2022 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, you increase funding for the program to \$35 million funding. This represents a modest but significant \$14 million increase, which would allow participating states to expand access and allow states that have not previously participated in the program due to the current funding level to do so. WIC FMNP is a critical program that encourages healthy eating in low income families while helping to improve the prosperity of independent, American farmers. Each year the program brings together 1.7 million WIC recipients with over 17,000 farmers.

When the WIC FMNP program was created in 1992, it was the first Federal program of its kind, with the intent of making fresh fruits and vegetables, grown by independent American farmers, available to low income shoppers. Today, the need for the program remains as research shows that all Americans, particularly those with low incomes, need more fruits and vegetables in their diets. In FY 2019, the program provided an estimated 67 million servings of fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables to low income pregnant women and children that to which they may not have otherwise had access. For recipients, WIC FMNP establishes healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime.

In addition to the nutritional benefits for recipients, the WIC FMNP program also provides increased economic value to local farmers. In FY 2019, the program resulted in \$22.3 million in additional revenue to America's hard-working farmers. In many cases, the program is a difference maker for farmers and farmers markets. For example, in 2018 farmers at the 51 Greenmarkets operated by GrowNYC in New York City redeemed \$2.56 million in FMNP checks. Thirteen of the 51 markets are so heavily reliant on the income farmers make from WIC FMNP that they would be forced to close without the program. In Washington state, farmers report that without WIC FMNP, 300 jobs would be lost.

Beyond the direct impacts on farmers and recipients, the WIC FMNP program also has a sizable impact on rural agricultural economies, stimulating economic activity and creating jobs, as well as fighting food deserts and supporting underserved communities. Government spending on food assistance programs stimulates additional fiscal activity better than any other form of spending. When that food assistance is spent directly on

independent family farms, the economic impact is further multiplied as that money flows through the regional agricultural economy.

For these reasons, we reiterate our strong support for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and urge members of the House Appropriations Committee to provide an important \$14 million increase, for a total \$35 million, to increase access across the country.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress

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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress