

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



FIGHTING *for* PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Wise Investment in our Children (WIC) Act of 2021

The WIC Act would close the ‘WIC Gap,’ a policy that kicks young children off vital nutrition assistance before they enter school. Vulnerable children across the nation are eligible for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program up to age five, at which point many enter public school where they may qualify for school breakfast and lunch programs that continue to supplement their intake of healthy food choices. However, a child’s birth date impacts his or her eligibility to enter school. A significant number of children remain ineligible for school well past their fifth birthday – sometimes for as much as a year. This legislation would extend eligibility for children to age six in order to close the gap. Additionally, the WIC Act would lengthen the certification time for infants and postpartum women utilizing WIC.

Specifically, this legislation would:

Extend Eligibility for Children to Age 6

The WIC Act would extend eligibility up to a child’s sixth birthday, or to when a child enters kindergarten. Research has shown that for children, WIC contributes to a healthier diet, cuts the risk of costly health problems and decreases developmental delays. By closing the WIC gap, nearly 600,000 children nationwide will maintain access to WIC’s vital nutrition services, assuring a continued strong health and nutrition foundation as children prepare for school entrance.

Extend Certification Periods for Infants

The first two years of life are a key timeframe to invest in the health of a child. By certifying infants for WIC for up to two years, instead of the current one year, this change will eliminate duplicative paperwork and focus WIC on health, nutrition, breastfeeding, immunization and pediatric referral services that will make a significant difference in the lives of infants and young children.

Extend Certification Periods for Postpartum Women

The WIC Act increases the certification timeframe for both breastfeeding and non- breastfeeding women to two years postpartum. Internatal care, the period between the birth of a woman’s child and until the birth of her next child, is now seen as a critical opportunity to improve the health of mothers and subsequent births. WIC’s vital services to postpartum non- breastfeeding women and breastfeeding women following delivery include breastfeeding services, nutritious foods, nutrition counseling, health screenings and resource referrals. WIC is uniquely positioned to continue these essential services for women during the later postpartum period and during future pregnancies.