

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.  
DELAWARE

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 1985

Dear Colleague:

Regardless of your opinion on the policy implications of the various deficit reduction plans, or your philosophy of the approach government should take in dealing with the problems of our nation, I believe we have agreed that we must use extreme caution in making cuts which impair the physical growth, health and long-term developmental potential of infants and children. Our unanimous vote on Thursday expressed the concern of the Senate over the WIC Program.

The Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Feeding Program (WIC), has long been hailed as an effective instrument for controlling the growing neo-natal mortality rate - a national tragedy. As an example, my home state has an extremely high infant mortality rate; 8.9 white infant deaths per 1,000 infants born, 16.7 non-white infant deaths per 1,000 born and in the City of Wilmington, Delaware, 32.5 black infant deaths per 1,000 babies born. It is my understanding that Delaware is not alone and that other states have similar statistics which are no better than those of developing nations.

Properly understood, WIC is not a cost but an investment in our children who are indeed the future of our country. For every dollar spent on the modest allotment of dry milk, oil, cheese and prenatal care, we save three to four dollars in health care costs for children after they are born. Additionally, the vital nutrients contained in recipes prepared from these staples prevent malnutrition and low birth rate which are leading factors in neo-natal mortality.

Malnutrition is defined as the "loss of normal body composition and function resulting from sustained deficits in the quantity of quality intake." The effects of malnutrition can be severe enough to inhibit normal growth. Though often invisible, malnutrition can be devastating upon the immature brain and thus upon the child's intelligence and behavior. That means that children who are malnourished during early childhood can never overcome the damage that results. They cannot achieve their God-given potential and can never make their full contribution to American Society.

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As you know, Congress approved \$1.5 billion this year for the WIC program. It only authorized the Administration to spend \$1.254 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year. The remaining \$246 million could be spent at the Administration's request, but the Administration has asked for only another \$169.3 million -- about \$76 million short of the \$1.5 billion.

We must act quickly to raise our concerns with the Administration. Increased numbers of children may die or suffer the effects of malnutrition if the full, authorized budget outlay for WIC is not immediately released to the states. I trust you agree that the Administration's failure to release the remaining WIC funds implies circumvention of the will of Congress.

If you would like to sign the attached letter to President Reagan, or if you need additional information, please have your staff call Margaret Owens 4-5042.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
United States Senator