

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 243

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 12, 2021

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman LINDA S. CARTER

District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)

Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY

District 18 (Middlesex)

Assemblyman HERB CONAWAY, JR.

District 7 (Burlington)

Co-Sponsored by:

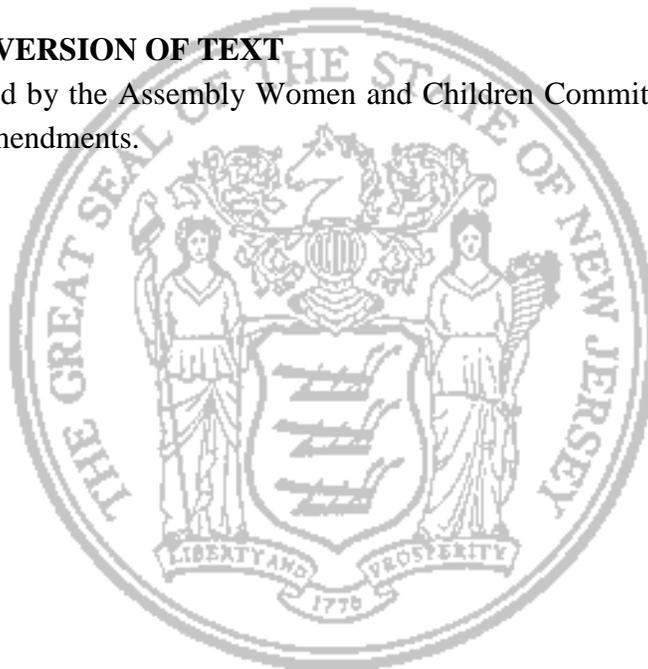
**Assemblywomen McKnight, Vainieri Huttle, Murphy, Swain and
Assemblyman Tully**

SYNOPSIS

Urges federal government to modernize access to WIC.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Women and Children Committee on May 12, 2021, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/21/2021)

- 1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the federal government to
 2 modernize access to WIC.
 3
- 4 **WHEREAS**, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 5 began operating the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for
 6 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), a federal assistance
 7 program for healthcare and nutrition ¹**[of]** ¹**for** low-income
 8 pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under the
 9 age of five, through state agencies in 1974; and
- 10 **WHEREAS**, The WIC program is currently the largest federal
 11 nutrition program after the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
 12 Program (SNAP) and the National School Lunch Program; and
- 13 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey WIC is a preventive public health nutrition
 14 program which utilizes various strategies to reduce the risk of
 15 poor pregnancy outcomes and to facilitate the improvement of
 16 the nutritional and health status of low-income pregnant,
 17 postpartum, ¹**[and]** ¹breastfeeding women, as well as infants and
 18 children; and
- 19 **WHEREAS**, To accomplish this goal, the program identifies and
 20 provides services that prevent nutritional and health problems,
 21 such as health screenings and nutritional counseling; and
- 22 **WHEREAS**, On average, the New Jersey WIC program serves over
 23 130,000 total participants each year; and
- 24 **WHEREAS**, There is strong evidence that the program reduces the
 25 risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, and infant mortality,
 26 particularly for the African American community ; and
- 27 **WHEREAS**, Mothers ¹**may** qualify for WIC during pregnancy and
 28 for up to a year ¹**[after]** ¹**postpartum**, ¹**[and]** ¹**while** children
 29 ¹**may** qualify until age five, with eligibility based on enrollment
 30 in other federal programs^{1, 1} such as SNAP and Medicaid ^{1, 1} or
 31 by income and nutritional risk criteria; and
- 32 **WHEREAS**, Despite the demonstrated nutritional and health benefits
 33 of the program, participation has been steadily declining over the
 34 past decade; and
- 35 **WHEREAS**, While there is no clear explanation for the decline,
 36 advocates and WIC administrators point to several contributing
 37 factors ^{1, 1} such as misconceptions about the program's eligibility
 38 and the high-contact nature of enrollment and certification; and
- 39 **WHEREAS**, In order to provide state agencies the flexibility to
 40 continue the WIC program during the COVID-19 pandemic, the
 41 USDA issued waivers that allowed for social distancing in the
 42 WIC program through remote certification and benefit issuance;
 43 and

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly AWC committee amendments adopted May 12, 2021.

1 **WHEREAS**, If these waivers were to continue post-pandemic and
2 access to the program was further modernized, there might be
3 more opportunities to offer more flexible ways to enroll and
4 expand access to eligible populations; and

5 **WHEREAS**, ¹~~【The】~~Because the¹ COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted
6 extreme economic hardship on many individuals in this State,
7 who might now become eligible for the WIC program, it is
8 ¹altogether ~~【proper】~~ fitting¹ and ¹~~【fitting】~~ proper¹ that this
9 House urges the federal government to modernize access to the
10 WIC ¹program¹ and promote flexible methods for program
11 enrollment and benefit issuance; now, therefore,

12
13 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
14 *Jersey:*

15
16 1. This House respectfully urges the federal government to
17 continue to modernize access to the Special Supplemental Nutrition
18 Program for Women, Infants, and Children ¹~~【allowing】~~ and allow¹
19 for more flexible methods of program enrollment and benefit
20 issuance.

21
22 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
23 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
24 President of the United States and the Secretary of Agriculture.