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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish a grant program to make grants to States to improve access to the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. TORRES of California introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish a grant program to make grants to States to improve access to the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Improving Access to
5 WIC Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. GRANT PROGRAM TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO WIC.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 1 year after
8 funds are first made available under subsection (g)(1), the

1 Secretary shall carry out a grant program to make grants
2 to each participating State agency for purposes of improv-
3 ing access to, and participation and retention in, the spe-
4 cial supplemental nutrition program for women, infants,
5 and children established under section 17 of the Child Nu-
6 trition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786) (in this section, re-
7 ferred to as “WIC”).

8 (b) OPT-IN PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary shall
9 make a grant under subsection (a) to each State agency
10 that opts in to the grant program by submitting an appli-
11 cation at such time, in such manner, and containing such
12 information as the Secretary may require.

13 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—A State agency that receives
14 a grant under this section shall use the grant funds to
15 carry out activities to improve access to, and participation
16 and retention in, WIC. Such activities shall include at
17 least one of the following:

18 (1) Conducting outreach to potential partici-
19 pants in WIC, including by—

20 (A) supporting direct referrals to WIC
21 from healthcare providers;

22 (B) establishing a Statewide uniform proc-
23 ess for such direct referrals; and

24 (C) improving the notification of, or refer-
25 ral systems for, such potential participants at

1 Head Start programs, preschools, elementary
2 and secondary schools, and such other pro-
3 grams or locations as the Secretary determines
4 appropriate.

5 (2) Establishing, maintaining, or expanding
6 State-wide or multi-State-wide data-sharing guide-
7 lines to better allow healthcare providers to—

8 (A) securely refer an individual to WIC; or

9 (B) with the consent of the individual, pro-
10 vide local agencies with read-only access to the
11 individual's clinical data necessary for WIC cer-
12 tification or participation.

13 (3) Streamlining healthcare providers' ability
14 to, subject to applicable law and with the consent of
15 the individual, send such individual's height, weight,
16 hemoglobin measurements, and other WIC-related
17 documentation, to local agencies for purposes of
18 WIC certification or participation.

19 (4) Activities to improve the WIC enrollment
20 experience, including establishing or expanding an
21 online application.

22 (5) Only for the purposes of certifying eligible
23 individuals for WIC, identifying and contacting indi-
24 viduals who receive medical assistance under title
25 XIX of the Social Security Act or are members of

1 a household participating in the supplemental nutri-
2 tion assistance program established under the Food
3 and Nutrition Act of 2008 who are not currently
4 participating in WIC.

5 (d) LIMITATION ON DATA SHARING.—Data collected
6 pursuant to subsection (c) shall be—

7 (1) used only for the purposes of—

8 (A) certifying eligible individuals for WIC;

9 (B) maintaining participation in WIC; or

10 (C) carrying out an activity specified in
11 paragraph (2)(B) or (3) of subsection (c); and

12 (2) subject to the confidentiality provisions de-
13 scribed in section 246.26(d) of title 7, Code of Fed-
14 eral Regulations (or successor regulations).

15 (e) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—For each fiscal year
16 in which funds are appropriated pursuant to paragraph
17 (1) of subsection (g), a State agency participating the pro-
18 gram under this section shall receive—

19 (1) to the maximum extent practicable, an ini-
20 tial amount of at least \$200,000; and

21 (2) an additional amount that bears the same
22 proportion to the amount appropriated for that fis-
23 cal year (less the amounts reserved under subsection
24 (g)(2) and distributed under paragraph (1)) as the
25 amount of participants in WIC in the State served

1 by the State agency bears to the amount of partici-
2 pants in WIC in all States participating in the pro-
3 gram, as determined according to the most recent
4 annual data available.

5 (f) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date
6 of the enactment of this Act, and annually for each year
7 subsequent to a year in which a grant is carried out under
8 the program, the Secretary shall make publicly available
9 on the website of the Department of Agriculture and sub-
10 mit to Congress a report—

11 (1) on the outcomes of the program (including
12 the impact of the program on participation and re-
13 tention in WIC); and

14 (2) that includes best practices for establishing
15 and carrying out the activities under paragraphs (1)
16 and (2) of subsection (c).

17 (g) FUNDING.—

18 (1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

19 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
20 this section \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal year 2027
21 through 2031.

22 (2) RESERVATION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EX-
23 PENSES.—The Secretary may reserve not more than
24 5 percent of funds appropriated under paragraph (1)

1 for administrative expenses related to carrying out
2 this section.

3 (h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

4 (1) The term “Head Start program”—

5 (A) means a program carried out under
6 the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.);
7 and

8 (B) includes Early Head Start programs.

9 (2) The term “local agency” has the meaning
10 given that term in section 17 of the Child Nutrition
11 Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786).

12 (3) The term “Secretary” means the Secretary
13 of Agriculture.

14 (4) The term “State agency” has the meaning
15 given that term in section 17 of the Child Nutrition
16 Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786).

17 (5) The term “WIC” means the special supple-
18 mental nutrition program for women, infants, and
19 children established under section 17 of the Child
20 Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786).