

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 970 (Senator Peters)  
Budget and Taxation

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Maryland Department of Health - Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for  
Women, Infants, and Children - Reports

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This bill requires the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), by December 1, 2019, and annually through December 1, 2021, to submit a report on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to specified committees of the General Assembly. The report must include, for the previous fiscal year, by jurisdiction, the number of women, infants, and children (1) receiving WIC and (2) eligible for but not receiving WIC. The report must also include barriers to increasing enrollment and recommendations on changes to program policies and procedures to increase participation rates. MDH must consult with specified stakeholders. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2019, and terminates June 30, 2022.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** MDH can submit the required reports using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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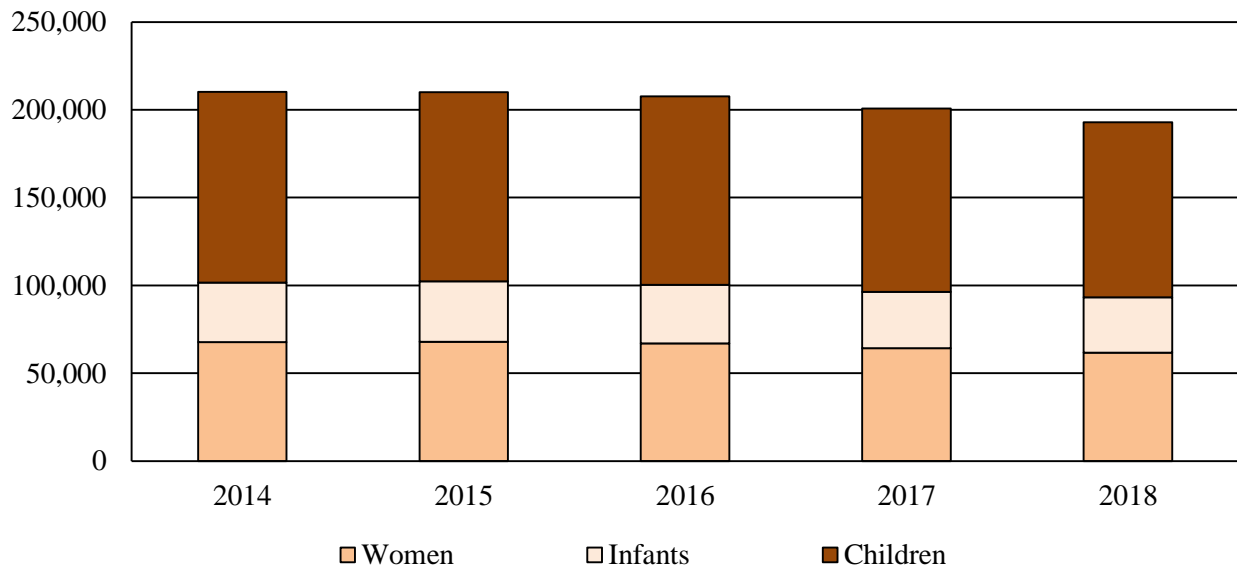
Analysis

**Current Law/Background:** WIC is a federally funded program that provides nutrition services, including nutrition education and supplemental foods, through local agencies located across the State to low-income (up to 185% of the federal poverty level) pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five.

In the 2018 *Joint Chairmen’s Report*, the budget committees requested a report detailing (1) the number of women, infants, and children receiving WIC by jurisdiction between fiscal 2014 and 2018; (2) an estimate of the number of people not receiving WIC in fiscal 2018 who are potentially eligible; (3) a description of how WIC is administered, including eligibility parameters provided by the federal government and required by the State; and (4) an evaluation of WIC programs in other states to determine the extent that other states have expanded access to or added to the benefit.

In January 2019, MDH submitted the [report](#). As shown in **Exhibit 1**, participation in WIC in Maryland declined from more than 210,000 in fiscal 2014, to just under 193,000 in fiscal 2018, an overall decline of 8.2%.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Maryland WIC Participants**  
**Fiscal 2014-2018**



WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Source: Maryland Department of Health

As shown in **Exhibit 2**, 28.3% of all women, infants, and children who were potentially eligible for WIC were not receiving benefits in fiscal 2018. According to MDH, the percentage of those potentially eligible who are not receiving benefits has increased from 21.8% in fiscal 2014, despite the size of the potentially eligible population remaining steady.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**Estimated Percentage of Individuals Eligible for WIC**  
**But Not Receiving Benefits by Jurisdiction**  
**Fiscal 2018**

<u>County</u>	<u>Eligible</u>	<u>Receiving Benefits</u>	<u>% Eligible But Not Receiving Benefits</u>
Allegany	3,418	2,504	26.7%
Anne Arundel	18,445	11,938	35.3%
Baltimore City	41,497	31,401	24.3%
Baltimore County	38,172	26,288	31.1%
Calvert	2,271	1,384	39.1%
Caroline	2,198	1,627	26.0%
Carroll	3,812	2,240	41.2%
Cecil	4,674	3,036	35.0%
Charles	6,186	4,300	30.5%
Dorchester	1,966	1,431	27.2%
Frederick	7,981	5,690	28.7%
Garrett	1,416	1,078	23.9%
Harford	7,846	5,099	35.0%
Howard	8,108	5,670	30.1%
Kent	719	522	27.4%
Montgomery	40,133	30,331	24.4%
Prince George's	55,240	41,180	25.5%
Queen Anne's	1,443	841	41.7%
Somerset	1,408	925	34.3%
St. Mary's	3,937	2,817	28.4%
Talbot	1,470	1,018	30.7%
Washington	7,948	5,475	31.1%
Wicomico	6,707	5,061	24.5%
Worcester	1,989	1,059	46.8%
<b>Maryland</b>	<b>268,983</b>	<b>192,915</b>	<b>28.3%</b>

WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Source: Maryland Department of Health

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MDH advises that many factors have contributed to the decline in WIC participation, some of which are positive for families, *e.g.*, fewer teen pregnancies, a decrease in unemployment or underemployment rates, and general improvements to the economy.

Other factors include decreasing birth rates and fertility rates and other food resources increasing and improving. MDH further advises that many immigrants are reluctant to apply or have chosen to terminate their participation due to fear of public charge issues. In addition, some families report that their children are in day care, preschool, or Head Start programs that provide one or two meals outside the home, thereby reducing the household need for food.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 506 (Delegate Valentino-Smith, *et al.*) - Appropriations.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Maryland Department of Health; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 15, 2019  
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