



**NEWS RELEASE For Immediate Release, May 6, 2020**

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## **United Fresh Applauds Introduction of Bill to Increase Fruits and Vegetables in WIC**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 6, 2020) – United Fresh Produce Association applauds the introduction of the WIC Benefit Flexibility During COVID-19 Act which will increase the cash value benefit for fruits and vegetables in the Women, Infants, and Children’s program (WIC) to \$35 month through the end of September 2020.

“By now, we are all well aware that the fallout from the coronavirus has brought immense challenges to those who are food insecure, including those who have recently fallen on hard times,” said Tom Stenzel, President & CEO, United Fresh Produce Association. “This legislation is an extraordinary step in recognizing that the current WIC benefit for fruits and vegetables is simply inadequate in helping young children and their mothers access enough fruits and vegetables to meet dietary recommendations and prevent diet-related chronic disease. We thank Congresswoman Kim Schrier and Congressman Ron Wright for their leadership on this important issue that will have a positive impact on both public health and fruit and vegetable growers.”

This legislation recognizes the urgent importance of accessing nutrient-dense fresh fruits and vegetables as emerging data show that those with underlying diet-related chronic disease are at greater risk for COVID-19 complications. Currently, the WIC program provides a monthly food package benefit for low-income women and children 5 and under, including a cash value benefit of \$9 for children and \$11 for women to redeem for fruits and vegetables. The WIC Benefit Flexibility During COVID-19 Act will give states the option to nearly quadruple the fruit and vegetable benefit for children, and triple the benefit for mothers, bringing the amount to a level consistent with recommendations included in the 2017 National Academy of Sciences report that outlined how the food package could be aligned with the Dietary Guidelines of Americans.

More than a decade ago, United Fresh and the National WIC Association collaborated to ensure that the WIC food package included fresh fruit and vegetables. Several recent studies have shown that obesity rates have declined for children who are enrolled in the program as a result of the food package update. As of January 2020, more than 6.2 million mothers and children participate in WIC, with enrollment expected to rise as a result of the economic hardships from coronavirus.

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## **About United Fresh Produce Association**

Founded in 1904, the United Fresh Produce Association brings together companies across every segment of the fresh produce supply chain, including growers, shippers, fresh cut processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, foodservice operators, industry suppliers and allied associations. We empower industry leaders to shape sound government policy. We deliver the resources and expertise companies need to succeed in managing complex business and technical issues. We provide the training and development individuals need to advance their careers in produce. Through these endeavors, we unite our industry with a common purpose – to build long-term value for our members and grow produce consumption.