



Supporting Healthy Outcomes for Mothers and Infants Act of 2019

Congressman David Trone (MD-06)

Background

Since 2002, there has been a five-fold increase in instances of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), a cluster of difficult symptoms endured by babies who undergo withdrawal from opioids in the days after birth. Every 15 minutes, a baby is born suffering from NAS. This condition presents unique challenges for feeding and weight gain because of the higher caloric requirements and impaired feeding behaviors of infants with NAS.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves nearly two million infants each year. This program is uniquely positioned to counsel pregnant and postpartum women on the impact of opioid use on infant growth and development, refer mothers who may be struggling with substance use disorder to appropriate services, and support the unique nutritional needs of infants screened for NAS.

About the Legislation

To help WIC services respond to emerging factors impacting the health of WIC participants, the *Supporting Healthy Outcomes for Mothers and Infants Act of 2019* would:

- Remove stigmatizing language in the Child Nutrition Act related to substance use disorder
- Instruct the Secretary of Health and Human Services and Secretary of Agriculture to collaborate in the development of evidence-based nutrition education materials for WIC-eligible pregnant women and caregivers to infants impacted by NAS
- Ensure WIC conducts outreach to those who may be eligible for the program and are impacted by substance use disorder
- Make any nutrition education and training materials developed available to state agencies through an online clearinghouse

Statement of Support

"The opioid epidemic is a public health emergency. Affected WIC families and WIC clinic staff know this first hand. Opioid use during pregnancy can inhibit infant growth, with some infants demonstrating symptoms of withdrawal upon birth. WIC clinics screen for signs of withdrawal and counsel participants on appropriate breastfeeding and nutrition strategies to mitigate the effects of opioid use on infant development. They work to support pregnant women and new mothers with appropriate education and referrals. This bipartisan legislation is an important step in strengthening WIC's work to meet the unique nutritional needs of families affected by opioid use."

-- Rev. Douglas Greenaway, President and CEO of the National WIC Association (NWA)