



**Middlesex
Coalition
For
Children**

Betsy Morgan, Director
30 Gordon Place
Middletown, CT 06457
860.346.1522 (phone)
860.344.5572 (fax; please call)
emorgan@wesleyan.edu

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**Testimony on S. B. 574 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE
FEDERAL SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR
WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN** to the Committee on Public
Health

March 10, 2008

Betsy Morgan, Director, Middlesex Coalition for Children

The Middlesex Coalition for Children strongly supports the intent of S.B. 574, "to establish a state-funded program substantially similar to the federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children and to require the Department of Social Services to advise applicants for assistance under some of the department's program of the availability of aid under said federal program."

- 1) The WIC program in Connecticut has faltered in recent years. The number of WIC clients, which reached a high of 65,000 in 1994, declined to 49,000 in 2001, and has fluctuated around 52,000 since. In the same period US WIC participation has grown from 6.5 million to over 8 million. Connecticut's lack of growth may be partly explained by the decline in the number of local WIC offices, from 21 in 1999 to 12 in 2008.
- 2) Neighboring states -- Massachusetts and New York -- have demonstrated the effectiveness of supplementary state funding in meeting the nutritional needs of low income women, infants and children in those states. Massachusetts' WIC program in particular has exemplary features Connecticut might study as it moves toward providing state support.
- 3) The amount of state funding proposed in this bill, \$500,000 -- 1.2% of the federal allocation in Connecticut -- while not sufficient to strengthen the WIC program significantly, could fund better service integration of WIC with other programs, as proposed in Section 2 (b), and support research into the design and effectiveness of supplementary funding programs in other states.
- 4) We urge that the use of the appropriated funds be more clearly defined than is currently the case in Section 3.

We urge the Public Health Committee to support S.B. 574 with the suggested changes.

Thank you for the opportunity of testifying.