



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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Delores Rubin
Chair

Jesse Bodine
District Manager

October 31, 2017

John Catsimatidis
Owner/Chief Executive Officer
Gristedes Supermarkets
800 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Re: Gristedes Supermarkets' WIC Participation

Dear Mr. Catsimatidis,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) is deeply concerned about Gristedes Supermarkets' decision to rescind their participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which took effect on August 12, 2016. By a vote of 33 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, Manhattan Community Board 4, in representation of the community at-large, **supports the request that Gristedes stand for the health and nutrition of women and children by renewing their participation in the WIC program.**

The New York State WIC program improves the health of low-income pregnant women, new mothers, postpartum women and their infants and children up to age five. This program offers nutrition education, breastfeeding support, referrals to social services and ensures that all families have access to nutritious foods. According to the USDA, "Children have always been the largest category of WIC participants. Of the 7.7 million people who received WIC benefits each month in FY 2016, approximately 3.98 million were children, 1.88 million were infants, and 1.84 million were women."¹

Foods made available by WIC are designed to supplement the diets of participants with necessary nutrients for good health. As a result, women who participate in WIC have been

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/frequently-asked-questions-about-wic>

proven to experience longer, healthier pregnancies and fewer premature births. Children and infants are healthier and perform better in school while healthcare costs for families are reduced.²

The success of WIC is sustained by large vendors, like Gristedes. Research shows that people who participate in the program primarily use WIC at larger grocery stores because they provide more of a selection of nutritious products. In our district, the brunt of contributions into this program are felt by smaller and medium-sized businesses, like Ideal Marketplace and Western Beef, who strive to offer groceries at a much more affordable rate.³

District Overview

According to the NYU Furman Center, MCB4 represents the interests of the neighborhood with one of the highest levels of income inequality in New York City, Chelsea.⁴ Our district is also home to three large public housing developments: the Chelsea-Elliot Houses, the Robert Fulton Houses, and Harborview Terrace.

Data provided by Erin Silk, a New York State Department of Health (DOH) representative, shows us that WIC serves an average of 259,750 participants in the five boroughs and an average of 507 participants per month in Chelsea. Unfortunately, there are only four WIC vendors in our district, all who happen to be small businesses. Two stores serve those 507 WIC participants within Chelsea zip codes, Ideal Marketplace and Western Beef while the other two vendors serving our district are Sugar Deli and Liberty Bagel Deli and Grocery located in Clinton/Hell's Kitchen.⁵

Below are comments from Western Beef and Ideal Marketplace representatives regarding WIC:

“We support our neighborhood with fresh food at affordable prices and stand by the WIC program. We love WIC and any supplemental programs that help serve the community.” - Dawn Addabbo, Chief Administrative Officer for Cactus Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Western Beef on W. 16th Street where WIC recipients make up 28% of their customer base.

“We welcome the WIC check. We are a business and we are serving the community and we do not have any issue with the WIC program. Our money gets reimbursed.” - Santo Fernandez, manager of Ideal Marketplace on Ninth Avenue who serves 85-100 WIC customers per week.⁶

² <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/wic/WIC-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

³ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/05/where-wic-participants-redeem-their-benefits/482535/>

⁴ Furman Center State of Neighborhoods Report:
http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/NYUFurmanCenter_SOC2014_HighRes.pdf (p. 155)

⁵ Department of Health List of WIC Vendors by location:
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/docs/wic_vendor_list.pdf (zip code 10036 does not have a WIC retailer, updated 9/5/2017)

⁶ Chelsea Now “Few Options for Chelsea WIC Participants; Petition Demands Change:
<https://chelseanow.com/2017/08/few-options-for-chelsea-wic-participants-petition-demands-change/>

Our Hopes for Collaboration

Taking into account the current state of our nation's political climate and their proposed cuts to Housing and Urban Development (HUD), healthcare, and welfare services, we urge you, as a lifelong New Yorker, to stand up for the health, nutrition, and wellbeing of, not only the residents of our district, but of all New Yorkers. It is our hope that we can open communications between yourself and the community so we can come to an agreement and continue to have a healthy, socially-conscious partnership with our district's businesses.

We look forward to working with you to ensure the successful re-integration of Gristedes as a WIC vendor.

Sincerely,



[Signed 10/31/17]

Barbara Davis, Co-Chair
Housing, Health &
Human Services Committee

Joe Restuccia, Co-Chair
Housing, Health &
Human Services Committee

cc: Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President