I find the agenda of Mead Johnson Nutrition Co. as outlined in “Congress Pressed on Baby-Formula Aid” (U.S. News, April 28) shocking and disgraceful. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) has enjoyed strong bipartisan support, including the option under attack by Mead Johnson that allows states to use Medicaid eligibility as an automatic qualifier for WIC enrollment. The pregnant and breast-feeding women and young children who enroll in WIC are nutritionally at risk, often juggling the perils of food insecurity, lack of access to health services and economic instability.

Republican legislators deserve much credit for linking eligibility between Medicaid and WIC as a successful way to reduce onerous paperwork and preserve the integrity of limited federal dollars so that they can be used to purchase WIC food packages and promote breast-feeding. Linking WIC (a preventive program) to Medicaid makes sense: WIC helps prevent nutrition-related illnesses, developmental problems and chronic diseases, which would be paid for by Medicaid.

The population Mead Johnson is focused on represents less than 2% of the total WIC population, according to USDA data. Infant enrollment in WIC has been on a steady decline, and rebates paid to the federal government have remained relatively constant. What has changed is that the breast-feeding rates of mothers participating in WIC have seen a sizable increase.

For Mead Johnson to advance a policy that would drop countless numbers of nutritionally vulnerable pregnant women and children from one of the most effective federal early-nutrition programs jeopardizes the health of all women and children enrolled in WIC. I urge Congress to protect the integrity of the program as it comes up for renewal this year.

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