

## **Advocates Vow to Block Trump Attack on Millions of Families and American Democracy** Congress Must Reject “Public Charge” Regulation, Advocates Urge

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Advocates for immigrant families and economic opportunity spoke out against a new Trump administration regulation that aims to prevent millions of families from accessing health care and other programs or risk denial of lawful permanent status in the United States. This “public charge” regulation received a record number of comments, the vast majority opposed to Trump’s move. Now that the rule has been finalized, advocates are mobilizing in courts and in Congress to block its implementation.

“This policy denies a permanent, secure future in this country to anyone who isn’t white and wealthy,” said Marielena Hincapié, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center. “We will not stand for it. The National Immigration Law Center is preparing to sue to fight back against this regulation and protect immigrant families.”

The “public charge” regulation was proposed last fall by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Independent estimates indicated it would threaten about 26 million people nationwide, directly or indirectly. In addition to targeting immigrants of color, with disabilities, and who have incomes below \$62,000, that proposal would have put applications for admission to the U.S. or applications for a “green card” at risk if an immigrant uses certain public benefits.

“This administration has been consistent in its use of harmful and hateful tactics to scare immigrant communities and create fear and anxiety for many immigrant families and their children,” said Olivia Golden, executive director of the Center for Law and Social Policy. “The rapid publication of this rule despite more than a quarter of a million comments filed during the 60-day comment period indicates that the Administration has deliberately chosen to ignore the perspectives, experiences, and research provided by a broad cross-section of Americans. These commenters included Members of Congress, Mayors, advocates for women and communities of color, faith leaders, the medical community, educators, immigrants and so many other Americans. These were people from all walks of life in our country who sent a message that this regulation threatens the economic strength of our country, and the future of our children. The decision to ignore them is shameful and lawless!”

The proposal drew more than 266,000 public comments, overwhelmingly in opposition. In addition, it was opposed by leading health care advocacy and provider groups, nutrition advocates, housing advocates, corporate CEOs, and advocates for economic opportunity, children, and working families.

“As a pediatrician, this public charge regulation is an assault on my professional role—I am unsure how to guide families when I know that enrollment in bread and butter services that keep them healthy could jeopardize the family unity. This final rule serves to further intimidate and frighten families who seek needed services to keep them healthy and productive. Taken together with other looming harmful proposals, these actions will have detrimental consequences on immigrant health and well-being,” said Julie Linton, MD, FAAP, Chair, American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Immigrant Child and Family Health.

The DHS regulation is one of several recent and planned attacks on immigrant families of color. Trump’s United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has drafted a companion regulation that would expand deportations based on immigrant families’ use of public programs. Advocates expect that the DOJ regulation will have an even greater “chilling effect,” because of the family

separation consequences of deportation. The Department of Housing and Urban Development also proposed regulations denying housing assistance to mixed-status families that include an undocumented person—a move that could reportedly make 55,000 U.S.-born children homeless. The Commerce Department also attempted to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census, prompting ultimately successful litigation arguing that the policy would disenfranchise voters of color. Like these policies, the public charge regulation finalized today is expected to have a disproportionate impact on children and families of color.

“This inhumane rule with racist roots is a shameful ploy by the Trump Administration to rig the immigration system for the wealthy,” said Cynthia Buiza, Executive Director, California Immigrant Policy Center. “Our message to our state’s strong, diverse immigrant community is simple: California has your back. A courageous network of advocates and community groups is fighting for you. We will not allow this harmful regulation to undo the powerful work we have done in California to protect all who call our state home.”

“To be clear, Trump’s final public charge regulation is still racist, classist and part of his administration’s white supremacist agenda to whiten the composition of this country,” said Jonathan Jayes-Green, Co-Founder and Director, UndocuBlack Network. “It is immoral, cruel and forces people to choose between their basic needs and the people they love. Across the country, out of fear, people are pulling out of public benefits that they qualify for. We reject these fear-based tactics and we will fight back as we always have.”

Congress also has the power to block the regulation’s implementation, and the House of Representatives is already taking action to protect families. The No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act, sponsored by Rep. Judy Chu (D-California), has more than 40 cosponsors and is endorsed by key advocates. As its name suggests, the bill would block funding of the regulation’s implementation. Senator Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) intends to introduce companion legislation after the congressional recess.

A recording of advocates’ comments during a press call today is available at <https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/PublicCharge-2019-08-12.mp3>.