

# PROTECTING IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Washington State



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Monday, August 12, 2019**

## **Advocates, Service Providers Condemn Trump’s “Public Charge” Income Test**

**SEATTLE, Wash.** — The Protecting Immigrant Families – Washington (PIF-WA) coalition condemns new regulations by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that effectively impose an income test on family-based immigration and scare millions of families away from crucial health, housing and nutrition assistance.

The now final regulations will take effect October 15, 2019 and broaden the criteria by which immigration authorities may deny permanent resident status if an applicant legally uses essential federally-funded public services like Medicaid, Section 8, and food stamps.

Many immigrants in the United States are supporting themselves and their families through working low wage jobs without health insurance, and so depend on Medicaid for their health care or food stamps to help feed their families. Many mothers and fathers would have to choose between accepting help for basic human needs (such as food, medicine, and shelter) and keeping their families together.

The rule would also effectively impose an income test on immigration, making it harder for families who earn less than 250% of the federal poverty line to stay together in the U.S. permanently – a bar that a third of the entire U.S. population wouldn’t be able to clear. The income-based factor in the rule means that immigration officials could deny individuals who work in important but low-paying jobs — such as home health workers and janitors — the ability to remain in the United States or rejoin families here.

The rule also outlines other negative factors that could make it easier for immigrants to be deemed a “public charge,” such as not having a college education, speaking English with limited proficiency, or simply being under age 18 or over age 62.

With the release of the final rule expected on Wednesday, and the accompanying publicity, more immigrants are likely to avoid services because of concern about compromising their immigration status. Chilling effects will reverberate beyond the population targeted by the regulation, due to complexity and confusion around precisely who will be affected, and in which programs. Parents may be afraid to take their children to the doctor, and others may be discouraged from accepting housing and nutrition assistance.

Coalition members are advising people who fear they may be affected by the DHS rule not to refuse assistance for which they or members of their household are eligible unless they receive individualized information about their circumstances from an immigration attorney. The final rule

will take effect on October 15, 2019 but litigation may delay or prevent implementation. National Immigration Law Center and the New York Attorney General have already expressed their intent to sue.

More information and resources are available at [www.protectingimmigrantfamilies.org](http://www.protectingimmigrantfamilies.org).

Protecting Immigrant Families - Washington State is a broad coalition of more than 30 nonprofit, public, and private sector organizations working to address the impact of potential changes to the public charge rule. The steering committee which helps coordinate the coalition's activities is comprised of Children's Alliance, OneAmerica, Northwest Health Law Advocates, and Entre Hermanos. We are part of the national Protecting Immigrant Families, Advancing Our Future Campaign, co-chaired by the Center for Law and Social Policy and the National Immigration Law Center.

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