



## Public Health Groups Oppose the Proposed Public Charge Rule

The proposed public charge rule would deny millions of people access to basic services that are the bedrock of the public health infrastructure. The proposed public charge rule seeks to limit programs and resources that have demonstrated evidence-based, positive impacts for the public's health. **If implemented, the public charge rule would limit access to critical public health services for millions of people and set the stage for a public health crisis.**

### Why does public charge matter for public health?

- Driving people away from health care, nutrition services and affordable housing could have drastic effects on the public's health.
- There will be worse health outcomes as people delay or forgo care and disenroll from public benefit programs. This will lead to an increased prevalence of obesity and malnutrition; reduced prescription adherence; higher rates of poverty and housing instability; and reduced education attainment.
- There will be higher costs to the public health system, as immigrants disenroll from public benefit programs and turn to emergency departments to treat preventable illness and chronic disease complications.
- Parents may not vaccinate their children, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and jeopardizing herd immunity, threatening the health of newborns, elderly, and individuals with compromised immune systems.
- Communicable and sexually transmitted diseases may go undiagnosed, and untreated leading to spread of the disease and preventable complications, including infertility.
- Pregnant women may delay or forgo needed medical attention endangering themselves and their unborn children.
- The proposed changes are detrimental to the public's health as a whole, but the effects will be particularly harmful to children who will face the impacts across their lifespan. Traumatic experiences, including a lack of access to healthcare, housing and quality food, all create the potential for shorter, sicker lives.

## What did major public health organizations groups have to say?

*"[The proposed rule] grossly overlooks the many long-term benefits of increasing access to health care coverage and nutritious foods. If finalized, this rule is likely to result in millions of individuals withdrawing from public benefits programs, including those who are not subject to the public charge test but are fearful that accessing public assistance programs will negatively affect their immigration status. The direct impact and chilling effect of this proposed rule threatens to erode decades of progress made in improving the public's health...At a time when our nation faces a declining life expectancy for the third year in a row, we cannot afford to promote policies that encourage people to abstain from basic health services and limit access to adequate nutrition and housing options."*

### **American Public Health Association**

*"Our country is stronger when we invest in the nation's health. All of our communities are connected. When our neighbors, families, and community members are healthy, it helps all of us thrive and reach our full potential. The proposed expansion of the public charge regulation will limit essential access to healthcare, housing, and food assistance for families who contribute each day to their communities. Denying access to basic needs programs will decimate our communities' health and wellbeing and fundamentally change who we are as a nation."*

### **Public Health Institute**

*We have seen a marked decrease in wellness and preventative care for some of our immigrant families... These decisions can literally cost a child its life, but also increase public health risks if these families have unvaccinated children or children with infectious diseases that aren't treated because of fear of immigration repercussions.*

### **National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners**

*"The public charge proposal announced by the Administration is cause for profound concern among Community Health Centers (CHCs) and the 28 million patients they serve... Access to affordable health care provides the medically underserved with the opportunity to contribute to their communities, thrive and reach their full potential. The rule will likely result in individuals, including those seen at health centers, being deterred from addressing their health care needs, ultimately leading to worse health outcomes for them and their communities."*

### **National Association of Community Health Centers**

*"Because the rule is complex and difficult to understand, the chilling effect is likely to cause eligible families either not to enroll in or disenroll from programs that help them stay healthy and pay for medical care at community health centers. This will cause many immigrant families to avoid seeking needed healthcare until their condition deteriorates, which could increase avoidable emergency room visits."*

### **The California Primary Care Association (CPCA)**

*The proposed rule would severely damage public health by undermining access to essential health, nutrition, and housing programs for immigrants and their families. No one should be forced to choose between meeting their basic needs for food, health care, and housing, and remaining in the US with their families.*

### **Prevention Institute**

*...threats to public health, such as epidemics, do not recognize immigration status. Should immigrants defer vaccinations and treatment of communicable disease and infections, it increases the likelihood of transmission among the total population.*

### **California Academy of Family Physicians**