



Housing Organizations Oppose the Proposed Public Charge Rule

The proposed public charge rule would jeopardize the housing stability of immigrants and their families and place them at risk of homelessness which could negatively impact their employment, education, health, and ability to otherwise be self-sufficient. **Immigrants encounter a variety of impediments to secure housing, such as language and education barriers, prejudice and discrimination, and cultural differences that may deter them from seeking and receiving services.** The public charge rule will exacerbate these challenges and affordable housing even further out of reach.

Why does public charge matter to affordable housing organizations?

- The rule specifically targets low-income immigrants, a population that already faces substantial barriers to housing. And housing assistance programs such as the Section 8 and public housing programs targeted by the proposed rule have proven crucial in reducing homelessness among low-income families.
- Immigrants disproportionately live in states with high housing costs. Immigrant workers, particularly those in areas with high rents, rely on stable housing in order to maintain their employment, contribute to local economies, and help their communities thrive.
- Reduced access to other work supports like healthcare or nutrition will make it harder for this at-risk population to pay rent or remain in private housing. And housing instability is significantly associated with poorer health and education outcomes.
- The proposed rule is in direct conflict with federal policy priorities of ending homelessness and federal mandates for states to provide certain assistance and programs to everyone.
- Housing providers, landlords, and state and local benefits agencies will be significantly burdened by the rule. Public housing agencies and other affordable housing providers have already begun to receive questions from tenants fearful about the implications of the public charge rule on their families. Furthermore, the rule would generate a tremendous workload for housing providers that will need to provide immigrants with documentation regarding their history of benefit receipt.
- Access to housing assistance is beneficial to families' economic prospects. Parents with access to vouchers are more likely to reduce their family's debt or credit problems with the money they are saving on housing, and some have used their increased financial stability to return to school or change jobs, improving their family's financial situation in the long run.
- Where housing instability turns into homelessness, these deleterious effects on children and youth's physical and emotional wellbeing and on their academic performance are multiplied.
- The proposed rule will significantly harm the U.S. housing market, and thereby the entire economy. Immigrants have a sizable presence in housing markets, making up 20 percent of renter households and 12 percent of homeowners.

What do major affordable housing organizations have to say?

“The proposed public charge rule would have widespread negative consequences on immigrant families who rely or would rely on housing assistance as a critical lifeline. The proposed rule would jeopardize their housing stability and place them at risk of homelessness, which could negatively impact their employment, education, health, and ability to otherwise be self-sufficient... We wholly reject the idea that some families are more deserving than others of having a safe place to live, and we condemn this proposal’s targeting of low-income immigrant families. No family should have to choose between immigration eligibility and having a roof over their head.”

National Housing Law Project

“Housing assistance programs such as the Section 8 and public housing programs targeted by the proposed rule have proven crucial in reducing homelessness among low-income families. Indeed, voucher programs cut a family’s risk of experiencing at least one night of homelessness per year by more than half. Immigrant families already suffer from discrimination that hinders their ability to secure affordable and adequate housing. The effects of this discrimination will be exacerbated if low-income immigrant families are denied access to resources that alleviate some of their economic strain.”

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty

“Access to safe, affordable housing is crucial for ensuring a decent quality of life and a chance at upward mobility for immigrant families. Nonetheless, across the state of Illinois, and the entire country, there is a severe shortage of affordable rental homes. All families need a stable home so they can send their kids to school, pursue educational and job opportunities, and lead healthy, productive lives.”

Housing Action Illinois

“Immigrant families are a part of our communities, whether as clients, staff, volunteers, families, or neighbors. Limiting these programs makes it more difficult to care for those living in or on the brink of poverty and homelessness. The safety net programs outlined in the proposed rule should be more broadly available in the best interests of society, not curtailed and stigmatized.”

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

“As use of rental assistance decreases, the likelihood that low income families fall into homelessness increases, with all of its personal and societal costs. Blaming immigrant families for the increasing gap between wages and housing costs and stripping them of their ability to access safe and affordable homes will only increase our country’s racial and economic disparities and put housing and well-being further out of reach for many families. The proposed rule, if implemented, would create significant longer-term costs to the federal government; people in unstable homes have poorer health, lowered educational attainment and lessened lifetime earnings.”

National Low Income Housing Coalition

“The rule specifically targets low-income immigrants, a population that already faces substantial barriers to housing. By chilling access to assistance from already at-risk groups, the new public charge rule threatens to plunge those already struggling even deeper into poverty, making their route to a better life nearly impossible.”

Housing California

“We note a change from an analysis that an individual is 'likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence' to an individual 'who receives one or more public benefits.' Herein, DHS appears, by definition, to attack and punish the successful administration of Section 8 and Public Housing programs to the individuals for which they are intended. In other words, the litmus test is no longer whether an individual is 'primarily dependent' on government assistance. Rather, it is whether an individual participates in these housing programs at all.”

Council of Large Public Housing Authorities/Reno & Cavanaugh, PLLC