



Congress Must Pass the LIFT the BAR Act

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For 25 years, an arcane policy has denied lawfully present immigrant families access to critical health and social services. Congress must act now to restore eligibility to federal public benefit programs that provide essential support to individuals and families. These programs are particularly crucial during times of economic and public health crises.

The LIFT the BAR Act restores access to programs like Medicaid, CHIP, and SNAP, by removing the five-year bar and other barriers that deny critical care and aid to people who are lawfully present. This includes people with “green cards,” Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, crime victims, COFA migrants, child maltreatment victims and orphans who hold Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), and other noncitizens residing lawfully in the United States.

In 1996, Congress passed restrictive welfare and immigration legislation that created unnecessary barriers, including an arbitrary five-year waiting-period—often referred to as “the five-year bar”—in some programs that delays access to critical benefits and services for immigrants. As a result, families have faced unnecessary hunger, illness and other harm.

The LIFT the BAR act would:

- Repeal key provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) that (1) restrict lawfully present immigrants’ eligibility for federal assistance programs, (2) allow states to adopt more punitive restrictions, (3) erect barriers for states or localities that wish to use their own funds to establish more inclusive programs, and (4) restrict or deter access to critical services for immigrants with sponsors.
- Redefine “qualified noncitizens,” a term used to define eligibility for many federal programs, to include any individual who is lawfully present in the U.S.
- Provide that individuals who have access to Affordable Care Act health insurance under current rules will not lose access to affordable coverage if they remain ineligible for Medicaid.

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