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NEW POLL: ¾ OF AMERICANS BACK RESTORING SAFETY NET ACCESS FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

WASHINGTON — A [poll released today](#) by the [Protecting Immigrant Families coalition](#) (PIF) finds that 74% of Americans support legislation to reverse policies that restrict safety net access for immigrants who are lawfully present in the United States and their families. The Lifting Immigrant Families Through Benefits Access Restoration Act (LIFT the BAR Act, [HR 5227](#)), is sponsored by Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-Washington). The public opinion research firm BSP Research completed the poll January 10-14, surveying 1,200 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of 2.8%.

“The American people get it — when we deny people healthcare and social services based on where they were born, our country is less resilient and more vulnerable to threats like COVID-19,” said Eddie Carmona, PIF’s director. “To protect us all, Congress must pass the LIFT the BAR Act now.”

Key findings from the research include:

- 74% favor restoring safety net access for immigrant families, including 37% who strongly support that policy change
- That includes 70% of white respondents, with respondents with other racial backgrounds being more supportive
- It includes 69% of respondents who do not hold either a high school or college degree, with respondents who have more extensive education being more supportive
- It includes 60% of self-identified political conservatives, with moderates and liberals being more supportive

“These results show broad support for ensuring immigrants and their families have access to basic safety net resources, across party, race, and ideology,” said Gabe Sanchez, Ph.D., Vice President of Research of BSP Research. “The American people want this policy to change and want it to change now.”

The [1996 welfare law](#) included several policies restricting immigrants who previously could qualify for assistance programs their tax dollars were paying for, including what is known as the “five-year bar.” This policy denies eligibility to “green card” holders and other lawfully-present immigrants for at least five years.

PRWORA’s five-year bar has much in common with the recently-reversed Trump Administration public charge policy, which penalized lawfully-present immigrants who used specific health care and social services programs. The [U.S. Commission on Civil Rights cited the five-year bar as contributing to racial disparities](#) in access to basic health and social services, and health policy experts found the Trump public charge policy [worsened the disparate racial impact of COVID-](#)

[19](#). The five-year bar, like the Trump public charge policy, applies to federal programs like SNAP and TANF that serve whole families. As a result, both effectively deny health care and social services to U.S. citizen spouses and children in immigrant families.

The LIFT the BAR Act would repeal the five-year bar and other barriers that deny critical care and aid to people who are lawfully present and their families. The Migration Policy Institute [estimated](#) that there are over 600,000 uninsured people with green cards who have been in the U.S. less than five years. The total number who would benefit from the legislation is likely much larger, given that the bar effectively denies care and aid to the U.S. citizen relatives of immigrants covered by the bar. In September, [more than 500 nonprofits signed a letter](#) coordinated by the PIF coalition, urging congressional leadership to pass the LIFT the BAR Act.

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