

**Testimony from the Legal Council for Health Justice
In Favor of Resolution 18-6425**

Good Morning. My name is Carrie Chapman and I am an attorney with the Legal Council for Health Justice. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. Legal Council is one of the four organizations that convened the Protecting Immigrant Families-Illinois coalition in order to resist the Administration's proposed changes to the public charge test. Legal Council for Health Justice provides free, civil legal services to low-income individuals and we work to make systemic changes to address inequality and discrimination in access to health.

The Administration's proposed changes to the public charge test are an unapologetic attack on low-income families who are lawfully in the U.S. and who are following all the immigration rules to continue to live here. The new test would favor wealthier applicants for green cards and disfavor working class and senior applicants. The proposed changes to the public charge test are also designed to force low-income families to choose between meeting their basic needs and being with their loved ones.

Only an Administration that wants to wage a war on the poor instead of a war on poverty would propose these changes to public charge.

Under this inhumane new test, immigration officials will be able to block immigrants who are seeking a green card through lawful processes and to block entry to the U.S. (usually requested by those trying to join their family here) merely because:

- Their current household income is below 125% of the poverty level, (about \$31,375 for a household of four), or
- They have received, or are judged *likely to receive in the future*, any of the following life-saving public benefits:
 - Medicaid;
 - SNAP (food stamps);
 - subsidized housing;
 - subsidies to help Medicare recipients afford prescription drugs; and
 - cash assistance through programs like TANF and SSI.

To reiterate, these are individuals who are following the immigration rules to stay permanently but who could be barred from a green card just because they are poor—in spite of the fact that many of them have husbands, wives, children and parents who are citizens or live here permanently.

This new rule is unquestionably about punishing the poor as much as it is about immigrants. In fact, if this new public charge standard were applied to **U.S.-born citizens** data shows that nearly ***one-third of them would be barred from adjusting.***

This rule hurts everyone by stigmatizing the social safety net and attacking low-income, working families.

This rule is specifically designed to drive fear in the immigrant community with families thinking about disenrolling from public benefits--all of which infuse tens of millions of vital federal dollars into the Illinois economy. The inclusion of Medicaid in the rule will potentially put extraordinary pressure on our health care safety net by increasing the number of uninsured individuals presenting for care.

The people affected are our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends. They work hard as our healthcare givers, they feed our children, they build our houses. They are a part of the fabric of all our communities and come from every part of the world. For many of us, me included, this rule would have barred our ancestors who came to this country for their shot at the American dream.

The history of this rule is shrouded in shame. As just one example, if you have ever wondered how this country justified turning away families and children fleeing the systemic murders in German concentration camps, we used tools including public charge.

This resolution presents an opportunity for decent people to voice their opposition to an indecent policy. If we want to progress, if we want to be our best selves, if we want to show that we value people and not wealth, we must fight this war on the poor. We must resist the morally bankrupt proposed changes to public charge.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today.