

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2022

### CONTACT

Eva Alvarez

[ealvarez@michiganimmigrant.org](mailto:ealvarez@michiganimmigrant.org)

(269) 389-0668

## MICHIGAN ORGANIZATIONS URGE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TO PROTECT IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

**LANSING** — A [comment](#) submitted on April 25, 2022, by the Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) Michigan campaign and 12 Michigan nonprofit organizations urges the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to act quickly in finalizing a “public charge” regulation that secures immigrant families’ access to the health and social services safety net. The PIF Michigan Campaign, which consists of the [Michigan Immigrant Rights Center](#) (MIRC), [The Michigan League for Public Policy](#), [Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation](#) (DHDC), [Voces](#), [African Bureau of Immigration & Social Affairs](#) (ABISA), and the [Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services](#) (ACCESS), were part of the 1,074 organizations nationwide that signed on to a comment coordinated by the national [Protecting Immigrant Families coalition](#) (PIF).

“The pandemic has made it crystal clear that when we deny families healthcare and social services based on where they were born, Michigan is less resilient and more vulnerable to public health threats like COVID-19,” said Eva Alvarez, Public Policy Coordinator at the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center. “The Trump public charge policy deterred immigrants of color in low-income families from applying for green cards and kept families separated during a time when family connections mattered more than ever. In our communities, we have seen the impact of families and their children accessing critical services.”

The comment was submitted in response to a [February regulatory proposal](#) that would largely restore and improve upon the public charge policy in place for 20 years prior to the Trump administration. The Trump public charge policy, which took effect just weeks before COVID-19 hit the United States, [deterred](#) millions in immigrant families from seeking healthcare and aid during the pandemic, undermining pandemic response and widening racial disparities in its economic and health impact. The PIF comment:

- Commends DHS for proposing a responsible definition of “public charge” that explicitly excludes Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other federal benefits from being included in a public charge determination; and for publishing an enumerated list of categories of immigrants exempt from public charge determinations; and

- Urges DHS to make specific improvements:
  - Clarifying that state, Tribal, and local cash assistance programs cannot be counted in public charge evaluations; and
  - Excluding long-term nursing home care under Medicaid

The comment also notes that including cash assistance programs that are launched during state or national crises in public charge determinations would also frustrate states' policy objectives and weaken response and recovery efforts.

[Research](#) has shown that the chilling effect of the Trump public charge policy extended well beyond the programs covered by that policy. For example, immigrant parents were deterred from covering their uninsured U.S. citizen children under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which is similar to, but different from Medicaid, a much larger health program named in the Trump policy. As stated in the comment, "allowing any type of Medicaid coverage to be considered in a public charge determination causes confusion and perpetuates the chilling effect." The comment also indicates that, because people with disabilities are more likely than others to require nursing home care, considering Medicaid-financed nursing home care in public charge determinations would bias the policy against persons with disabilities.

"These public charge changes are critical in encouraging Michiganders in immigrant families to get the assistance and care they need," said Monique Stanton, president and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. "Finalizing a new public charge regulation will help power the pandemic recovery and build a healthier, stronger future for our country."

###