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December 10, 2018

Samantha Deshommes, Chief
Regulatory Coordination Division
Office of Policy and Strategy
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20529-2140

Re: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2010-0012, RIN 1615-AA22, Comments in Response to Proposed Rulemaking: Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing on behalf of the Grove Foundation in response to the Department of Homeland Security's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to express our strong opposition to the proposed changes regarding "public charge," published in the Federal Register on October 10, 2018. The rule should not be changed. It should remain as is and the current interpretation should continue to be applied.

Founded in 1986, the Grove Foundation is a private family philanthropy based in Los Altos with primary program areas in immigration, reproductive health, safety net, and the environment. Much of the grantmaking is local, but we also fund some issues nationally. Our grantmaking has sought to further human rights and alleviate local poverty.

Erosion of Philanthropy Investments

The proposed rule will devastate the communities we have invested in for the past thirty years. The Grove Foundation has supported a host of safety net programs, including food banks, emergency rental assistance, education, and work force programs. We have also funded immigration legal services as well as programs that work to educate immigrants on the benefits they are legally entitled to receive. Tremendous fear pervades the local immigrant community as a result of the proposed new rule. I know this firsthand because I volunteer at a local immigration organization that provides citizenship assistance. Through that work I have become aware that even legal permanent residents and refugees are refraining from receiving benefits. Generally, immigrants use public benefits at lower rates than their native counterparts. But now countless immigrants are going without them in fear of losing their ability to gain or maintain legal status.

According to 2010 Census data, 16.5% of San Mateo County's population of close to 800,000 people is comprised of non-citizens. In recent demographic studies, the Migrant Policy Institute (MPI) has found that 41% of the county's noncitizens live in families that use at least one of the four means-tested benefits that could be considered in a public charge determination. In California, nearly half of all children have a parent who is foreign born, and about one in six children have at least one undocumented parent. Because so many families live in households

that are of mixed legal status, U.S. citizen children will undoubtedly be affected by the proposed rule. MPI estimates that combining the number of eligible adults who face public charge determinations with the children in those households, the number affected in the county could reach 100,000 people. That means an eighth of the population will need to resort to local food banks, emergency rental assistance, and other poverty programs.

Additionally, because the proposed rule expands the list of public benefits that will be considered in public charge determinations, we are likely to see an increase in the disenrollment of immigrants from these services. Thus, immigrants will forego using health services and nutritional benefits that keep them and their families healthy. The result is that more people will be sicker. And, the county will incur more and higher public costs when their symptoms manifest into more complicated illnesses that require emergency services. Moreover, untreatable illnesses will jeopardize the public health of the whole community.

Closing the door to all but the wealthy

When my husband Andy Grove and I arrived in this country in the 1950s, we were poor and spoke little English. Andy was a refugee, escaping from the Hungarian revolution. I came with my family from Bolivia. My family had settled there after we left Austria in 1938 after the Nazis took power. Although Andy was a refugee and would have been exempt from the rule, my family might have been too poor and might not have been granted green cards. The proposed rule considers a number of factors including age, health, employment, English proficiency, and the use of various public benefits and weighs them negatively. The only families who are viewed favorably under the rule are those who already earn over 200 percent of the poverty level, more than the median income in this country.

The proposed rule is fundamentally wrong and cruel. Immigrants work and pay taxes for services that benefit all of us. But if the rule is adopted, immigrants will be afraid to seek critical services, preventing them from becoming strong contributors to the country.

As has been proven time and again, given an opportunity and just a token amount of public assistance, these hard-working immigrant families thrive and proudly contribute, just as Andy and I did. **Opportunity is the promise America has held out to the world. We should not step away from that promise.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to the proposed rule and for considering my comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (650) 523-1330 if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

Eva Grove
Founding Trustee, The Grove Foundation