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Agency: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Document Type: Rulemaking

Title: Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds

Document ID: USCIS-2010-0012-0001

Comment:

November 28, 2018

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

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

Dear Sir/Madam;

As president of Woods Fund Chicago, I am writing to express strong opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Public Charge, published in the Federal Register on October 10, 2018.

Woods Fund Chicago is a private grantmaking foundation that funds community organizing and public policy advocacy efforts across the Chicago metropolitan region to fight the brutalities of structural racism and economic injustice. Our commitment is to individuals and families most impacted by racism and economic injustice, including the immigrant communities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. We believe this rule change is racist and will largely impact poor immigrants of color.

By systemically denying and discouraging families and their children, many of whom are U.S. citizens, access to basic supports, this rule change will financially and emotionally burden families, exacerbating racial disparities and income inequality. The nature of this rule change, targeting low-income, middle-income and underemployed immigrants covertly perpetuates negative stereotypes about immigrants and their families. If finalized, this rule would impact the ability and the inclination of immigrant families to access basic government supports that they are eligible for. These supports include SNAP, Medicaid, Medicare Part D subsidies, and public housing subsidies.

This policy will undermine access to essential health care, food and shelter for over 1,000,000 immigrants and their families across Illinois, including families that have been here for years and have been contributing members of their communities. By forcing choices no family should have to make, this rule change puts our whole state at risk by unnecessarily stressing already stressed support programs and exacerbating the impoverished conditions of these families. The harms caused by this rule to immigrant families will most certainly extend into the communities where they live and work; experts estimate that there could be a decline of between 20% and 60% of people accessing care, which will have reverberations in their families and communities.

The threat of this rule has already caused many immigrants to discontinue accessing basic supports for their families, including summer food programs, Women and Infant Children and medical care. It is these kinds of noncash benefits that make up the bulk of benefits used by immigrants and why the proposed changes would have such widespread impact.

Philanthropy is often being called upon to fill the social service gaps that government spending leaves, and philanthropy is not equipped to do so. Philanthropy best works in a complementary way with government, building on the foundation of basic supports the government provides. By forcing grantmakers to shift these resources requires a shifting away from already needed services.

The Administration should immediately withdraw its proposal. The safety and humanity of individuals should be among the defining characteristics for welcoming them to our communities, not how they look or how much money they have.

Grace B. Hou, President
Woods Fund Chicago
Chicago, IL 60601

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