

## Letter to the Editor on Public Charge

On October 10th, the Department of Homeland Security filed a change to a long-standing tenet of federal immigration law that will endanger the health and well-being of American children and families. If enacted, it would put millions of working immigrant families and their children at a great risk of hunger, poverty, homelessness, and other hardships; and destabilize communities across the entire country.

The Public Charge rule change seeks to bar noncitizens from obtaining legal permanent residency status if the government determines that the applicant is likely to become a “public charge”—an individual likely to use public benefits, such as Medicaid, SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), some parts of Medicare, and housing subsidies such as Section 8. As a result, immigrant families, many of whom are American citizens, are choosing to opt out of these and other critical public benefits to avoid being separated from their families or compromising their legal status.

As philanthropic organizations who are concerned with the needs, health, welfare, and concerns of the Chicago and suburban communities, we unite to denounce this discriminatory and damaging rule change. We stand strongly with our immigrant communities and our grantee organizations and recognize that the ramifications of this rule change go beyond our immigrant communities, reverberating out into national and local economies, our education system, and in several aspects of our daily lives. The state of Illinois stands to lose a minimum of \$250 million in federal funding and between 3,200-7,500 job losses due to the rule change.

Immigrants in Illinois and around the country make significant social and economic contributions to our communities. Immigrant-led households contributed \$9.8 billion in federal taxes and \$5.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2014. Undocumented immigrants in Illinois paid an estimated \$758 million in state and local taxes in 2014 and their contribution would rise to \$917.4 million if they could receive legal status.

We encourage community members, policymakers and philanthropic colleagues to submit a public comment denouncing this rule change and to elevate the powerful stories of our immigrant communities. We will continue our support for the organizations who are educating and mobilizing people on the ground. As institutions and individuals who believe in the value of humanity, we are responsible for standing up to injustice towards others and ensuring that we all have the right to a healthy and vibrant life.

Sincerely,  
Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance  
Conant Foundation  
Healthy Communities Foundation  
Michael Reese Health Trust  
The Blowitz-Ridgeway Foundation  
The Field Foundation  
The Wieboldt Foundation  
United Way of Metro Chicago  
VNA Foundation  
Woods Fund Chicago