

Submit comments opposing the ‘public charge’ proposal!

Emma Lazarus’ poem at the foot of the Statue of Liberty invites the world to “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” For centuries, people have come with little or nothing, and built new lives and new fortunes here. It’s the American Dream.

But now the Trump administration wants to slam the door on working-class immigrants by subjecting anyone who earns less than 250% of the federal poverty line (\$62,750 for a family of 4) to intense scrutiny, and effectively excluding anyone below 125% of FPL (\$31,375 for a family of 4).

Immigrants applying for a green card or visa could be deemed to be a “public charge” – someone who depends on the government – and turned away if they earn below 250% of FPL and use any of a wide range of public programs for working families, or are deemed to be likely to use them in the future.

This is an assault on America’s fundamental values, and we must fight back. You don’t have to be an expert to make a difference: Whether you’re an immigrant yourself, a community advocate, a service provider, a business owner, an elected official or just a concerned citizen, you can help us ensure that the government is overwhelmed with comments opposing this proposal.

In partnership with Health Care for All, Health Law Associates and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, we’ve put together this guidance and a collection of resources to help you.

You can submit your comments on our portal: <https://bit.ly/PIF-MA> (preferred) or hand-write them on the back of this form. Your comments can be as short as 250 words, or as long as you need them to be; there’s a 5,000-character limit on the portal; if your comment is longer, and/or if you’d like to submit it on letterhead, please email it as a PDF to kcano@miracoalition.org.

Here are some pointers:

1. **Clearly state your position upfront**, then again at the end: For example: “I am writing to express my opposition to this proposed rule change.” And then finish: “For these reasons, I urge the administration to withdraw this proposal and leave the definition of ‘public charge’ unchanged.”

2. **Describe your personal context.** Are you an immigrant or child of immigrants? Where did you come from, and under what circumstances? What sacrifices did you have to make to build a life here? Did you get help from community organizations or public programs? If so, what difference did they make?

For example: “I owned a business in El Salvador, but when I came to Boston with my family to protect them from violence there, the only job I could get was cleaning offices. I worked 60 hours a week for 10 years before I could open a business here, and my wife, who was a teacher, worked as a cook. We used to share an apartment with another family and were uninsured for a long time. But thanks to Medicaid, our children were always covered, and our youngest, who had asthma, got her treatments. Now we’re all U.S. citizens, and my oldest son just graduated from UMass Boston. None of this would be possible if the proposed standards had been in place when we arrived.”

3. **If the rule could affect you personally, explain how.** Are you applying for a green card? Is someone in your family enrolled in programs covered by the proposed rule? Are you worried that if this rule is implemented, you won’t be able to meet your family’s needs? What would it mean for you if you had to choose between staying enrolled in a program or getting your residency?

4. **If you work with immigrants, describe the context.** Do you own a business, or do you work for an organization that serves immigrants? Who are your customers/clients/members? Where do they come from? What kinds of jobs do they have? What do you know about how they came to the U.S., their economic situation, and the role of public benefits in their families' lives? For example: "I am a pediatrician at Main St. Community Health Center in CityX, Mass., which provides primary care for about 2,000 immigrant families, most of whom are uninsured or on Medicaid." Or: "I am executive director of the Cape Verdean Women's Collaborative, an immigrant-led nonprofit that helps women learn English, gain job skills and advance socio-economically. Most earn well under \$25,000 per year."

5. **What are you hearing from your immigrant clients, co-workers, friends and relatives?** Are they confused? Afraid? Are they giving up benefits that their children need? How do you feel? Explain why the "public charge" proposal goes against your values – and against fundamental American values.

¿READY? Use our online portal: <http://bit.ly/PIF-MA>

Need to handwrite your comment? Do it here:

Name:

Email:

Address (optional):

City:

ZIP code:

Why do you oppose the 'public charge' proposal?