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Proposed Changes to Federal Immigration Rules Will Harm Health and Wellbeing of our Communities

what is public charge?

Public charge refers to a long-standing immigration rule that says the government can deny entry or permanent residency to an immigrant who is likely to become "primarily dependent" on the government for support. Public charge only applies to immigrants who receive cash benefits or long-term institutional healthcare paid for by the government.

what might change with public charge?

As you may have heard in the news, the Trump administration released proposed changes to the public charge test. The proposal will expand the types of public benefit programs considered in the public charge test to include the following benefit programs:

- Non-emergency Medicaid (with limited exceptions for certain disability services related to education)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps)
- Low Income Subsidy for prescription drug costs under Medicare Part D; and
- Housing assistance such as Section 8 housing vouchers

The proposal would also require that **applicants**, not just sponsors, have income **above 125% of the poverty line**, or $15,175 per year for an individual and $31,375 per year for a family of four.

To avoid the public charge test, an applicant would have to earn **over 250%** of the federal poverty level, or $30,350 for an individual and $62,750 for a family of four.

If finalized, this change would create a discriminatory immigration system that can only be accessed by the wealthy.

what will NOT change with public charge?

1. Only benefits received by the applicant will be considered in the public charge test. Benefits, like SNAP or Medicaid, that an applicant's children or other dependents receive **CANNOT** be considered in the public charge test.

2. Many immigrants are **EXEMPT** under law from the public charge test, such as refugees, asylees, and other groups with humanitarian immigration status.

3. The public charge assessment only applies to student, work, or family visa holders when they are requesting permission to reenter the country, or adjust status, such as apply for lawful permanent residency (LPR) status.

4. The public charge test only applies at time of admission to U.S. or adjustment of status to permanent residency. **There is NO public charge test when you apply for residency.**