



First 5 Monterey County Comments on the Public Charge

On behalf of First 5 Monterey County, I am submitting opposition to proposed changes to the Public Charge Rule that would limit lawful immigrant families from having a permanent, secure future in the United States. Under the new rule, immigrants who legally access health care, safe housing, and healthy food programs could be denied admission to the country or refused a green card. We oppose this rule for three reasons:

Impacts A Large Portion of Our Community. Nearly half of our state’s children live in immigrant families. The way this policy is designed, it will most deeply harm lawfully present immigrants and their children, and “mixed-status” families, where some members are citizens and others are not. The rule change targets immigrant families who make up the fabric of Monterey County, California, and our nation. These families contribute socially, economically, and civically to our communities and our state. This forces families to choose between ensuring children have food, health care, and housing, and keeping their families together.

Disproportionally Affects the Poor. One in four children in Monterey County live in poverty. Our local communities rely on countless immigrants who contribute to our local service, agricultural, and child care fields and yet are the working poor. Programs like health care (Non-Emergency Medicaid), food supports (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: SNAP), and housing assistance (Section 8) help families meet their basic needs. In working with families, First 5 Monterey County sees how vital the contributions from immigrants are to our local communities. If this regulation moves forward, only the wealthiest immigrants could build a future in the United States.

Puts Millions at Risk. The proposed regulation would make—and has already made—immigrant families afraid to seek programs that support their basic needs. The proposal could deter immigrants from using the programs their tax dollars help support, preventing access to healthy, nutritious food and secure housing. It goes against volumes of research pointing out that a family’s access to basic necessities improves a child's health, well-being, school success, and economic security. Because one in four American children have at least one immigrant parent, this could impact millions. It would make us a sicker, poorer, and hungrier nation and this will have an impact on us all.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns and opposition. We look forward to finding solutions that remain inclusive and supportive of all immigrants and provide a foundation for our youngest children.