

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



July 18, 2018

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Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Director Mulvaney,

As members of the Washington State House Democratic Caucus, we write to express our collective concern regarding proposed changes to the Inadmissibility and Deportability on Public Charge Grounds rules (RIN 1615-AA22) from the Department of Homeland Security. We, the undersigned, strongly oppose this proposed rule, which threatens the health and wellbeing of all of us, including immigrants. We urge the Administration to withdraw this dangerous proposal and work with us to build policies that support immigrants as healthy, productive and successful members of America's communities and families.

This troubling proposed rule would exacerbate existing issues of poverty, hunger, unmet health care needs. Such a rule is clearly intended to deny basic supports to lawfully present immigrants and their families—including millions of U.S. citizen children. The rule would mark a fundamental change from our nation's historic commitment to welcoming immigrants. It would radically reshape our legal immigration system, redefining who is 'worthy' of being an American and what we look like as a country. These are not the ideals of our country, and we urge the Department to reconsider this ill-advised proposal.

Further, it is inconceivable that the impact on federal programs would not exceed the \$100 million threshold for an economically significant rule. The passage of this rule would initiate a domino effect of significant economic and administrative impacts in Washington State. According to one estimate, Medicaid and CHIP provide health coverage to more than 8 million children who are U.S. citizens and have at least one immigrant parent — including 240,000 in Washington State alone. If just 30,000 of these children decline health care because of the proposal, the impact would easily exceed the threshold for an economically significant rule, before even taking into account the effects in SNAP, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the child tax credit, WIC and other programs.

These programs are supported in part by the billions of dollars in taxes paid by immigrant families, and they play a critical role in helping to keep children and their families from falling deep into poverty. Should the federal government carry out this proposal, our state expects many eligible individuals to stop using their benefits or not apply at all. This will undoubtedly lead to people across the U.S. going hungry, not accessing needed medical care, losing economic self-sufficiency, and even becoming

homeless. This proposal will increase downstream costs on taxpayers, do irreparable harm to the productivity of our economy, and compromise the health and safety of our communities. For example, strong evidence shows:

- Public Health - Seattle & King County estimate there are almost 10,000 households in Seattle with at least one immigrant family member enrolled in Medicaid and therefore would be impacted by this proposed public charge rule. They estimate that if just 6% of the 10,000 households were to disenroll or forgo Medicaid coverage, the economic impact to Seattle would be over \$1.6 million annually—if that percent increased to 25%, we would experience an economic impact of about \$7 million annually.
- According to calculations from Northwest Harvest, the economic impact to Washington state if just 6% of immigrant families disenrolled from SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) would be a decrease of \$7,831,245 to the annual economy. The number jumps to \$32,630,187 annually if a quarter of families give up SNAP.
- Additionally, Northwest Harvest found that the economic impact to Washington State if just 6% of immigrant families disenrolled from WIC (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) would be an economic impact of \$276,852 annually. If a quarter of families leave WIC, this number rises to \$1,153,551.
- Local benefits would be affected as well. The City of Seattle found that the estimated economic impact to the City if immigrant families forgo such local benefits as the Utility Discount Program (discounts on utility bills for eligible low-income households) would be \$2,300,000 annually.

We have concerns about the deep economic impact that this proposed rule would have on local and state governments, as well as the economy as a whole. Washington is home to 455,000 children who are U.S. citizens and have at least one immigrant parent. Our state is deeply concerned that this rule directly threatens their access to basic food, health care, and housing. We urge the Department to reconsider this rule as it is harmful to the families and children of Washington State.

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Bi. E. Blah

Lina Orwall

Israel Tuleu

Tona R. Lee

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

October 10, 2018

The Honorable Brian Blake
State of Washington
House of Representatives
437A Legislative Building
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504

Dear Representative Blake:

Thank you for your July 18, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has posted on its website a proposed rule addressing the public charge ground of inadmissibility under section 212(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register in the coming days will afford the public, including state legislators, with an opportunity to offer comments during a 60-day comment period. A final rule would only follow after careful consideration of the public comments received.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue. Please feel free to share this information with the co-signers of your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna
Director