

February 3, 2021

### **New Executive Order Takes First Step Towards Ending Public Charge Wealth Test**

Legal Council for Health Justice lauds President Biden for announcing through Executive Order plans to review the Trump Administration's punitive and discriminatory public charge rule that has kept millions of immigrant families in Illinois and across the country from accessing key public benefits like food assistance, housing support and affordable health coverage that should be available to everyone. Although the Executive Order could not repeal the rule and it remains in effect right now, we applaud the President for taking this critical first step towards undoing the damage caused to the health and well-being of immigrant families and of all Illinois communities by the previous administration.

The public charge rule has been nothing short of devastating for immigrant communities since it was announced in 2018. The rule has instilled fear and untold suffering in the lives of hard-working immigrants who felt they had to go without crucial health care and other services or risk their chance to remain in the U.S. with their families. The cruelty of the previous administration's changes to the public charge rule are highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as immigrant families go without health care and food in spite of bearing a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 infection rate, hospitalization and death, and working tirelessly on the front lines of the crisis in our health centers, groceries and essential services.

We expect that repeal of the rule or a final victory in court against the rule will take some time. We [continue to litigate](#) on behalf of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights to have the rule declared illegal as a final matter, and this Executive Order indicates that the new administration is working on their side to review the rule and end its harmful effects.

"We are hopeful that we are on a positive path forward. But we also know that the erosion of trust that has occurred among immigrant communities as a result of this rule will take time and intentional action to repair," said Carrie Chapman, Senior Director of Litigation and Advocacy at Legal Council.

The policy back-and-forth has sown confusion that has an enduring chilling effect on the likelihood of immigrant families to apply for benefits and programs such as Medicaid or SNAP/food stamps. There is much work to do to regain that trust even once the rule is gone.

As a leading agency of the Protecting Immigrant Families Illinois coalition, Legal Council remains committed to protecting the rights and well-being of immigrant communities as we work to bring this dark era of immigration policy to a final close.

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Legal Council for Health Justice uses the power of the law to secure dignity, opportunity and well-being for people facing barriers to reaching their full potential due to illness and disability. Our programs partner with health and hospital systems to train and support the care provider network, provide direct representation to referred patients and conduct systemic advocacy to promote health equity among populations living with chronic conditions. For more information, visit [legalcouncil.org](http://legalcouncil.org).