



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) condemned the Trump Administration's final rule announced today that will change long-standing rules about legal immigrants' use of public benefit programs. These "public charge" rules, which were released earlier in the year in draft form and drew more than 210,000 sets of comments from organizations and individuals across the country, including CWDA, will be published Wednesday in final form in the Federal Register. The rule will take effect 60 days after publication, although at least one national group has already indicated its intent to pursue legal action to stop the rules from taking effect.

"The Trump Administration has now finalized this unnecessary and overly harsh set of changes to public charge rules, though it's important to understand that these changes won't take effect immediately," said Cathy Senderling-McDonald, deputy executive director of CWDA. "This gives time for those who may be affected going forward to decide what to do about their personal circumstances and for legal challenges to occur. We encourage members of our immigrant community to consult reliable sources, such as trained immigration attorneys, to discuss their specific situations."

The new rules expand the definition of benefits that could contribute to an immigrant being deemed an actual or potential "public charge," which could negatively affect their ability to obtain or extend a visa to enter the country or achieve lawful permanent residency (a.k.a. a "green card"). For the first time, receipt of benefits such as Medicaid (known as Medi-Cal in California), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as CalFresh in California) and Section 8 housing subsidies could be taken into account when decisions are made about entry into the country and adjustment of immigration status. All of these programs help struggling, low-income individuals feed their families and themselves, stay healthy, and ultimately become self-sufficient.

"Today, the public charge rule is applied in relatively narrow circumstances," Senderling-McDonald said. "But the rule has always been confusing, and these changes only make it worse. Given the totality of the Trump Administration's negative rhetoric and policy choices regarding immigrants, whether they are in the country legally or not, we are particularly concerned about the chilling effect this rule will have on the willingness of our immigrant community to apply for and receive assistance that they need and are eligible to receive – especially if it could affect their future status."

[The County Welfare Directors Association \(CWDA\)](#) is a statewide non-profit association representing the human service agency directors of all 58 counties in California. The Association's mission is to promote a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities, and protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect.