

NATIONAL LAW ON HOMELESSNESS &

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Public Charge Rule Undermines Human Rights, Harms Families and Communities

(December 10, 2018, Washington, DC) –Today, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty joined the close to 190,000 other commenters in submitting a [comment](#) opposing the proposed “[public charge rule](#),” that will prevent immigrant families from pursuing permanent legal residency if they or someone in their household legally uses assistance through certain federal programs including housing and nutrition programs.

Maria Foscarinis, Executive Director of the Law Center stated, “We are conscious that we file our comment on December 10, [International Human Rights Day](#). Let us be clear: human rights and human needs do not disappear based on immigration status. Everyone needs a safe, secure place to live, nutritious food, and access to adequate health care. Keeping poor families out of housing and denying them food will only force them into deeper poverty and potential homelessness. This hurts them, their children and our communities.”

Beyond the direct impact of the rule itself, it will have a chilling effect even for assistance or immigrant subpopulations that are in theory “exempted.” Passing this policy is likely to discourage immigrant families from pursuing benefits that they are still entitled to out of fear of retribution.

The rule undermines the Administration’s own [Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#), issued just a few months ago, which calls for an increased focus on preventing homelessness, including by “Improv[ing] access to federally funded housing assistance by eliminating administrative barriers and encouraging targeting and prioritization of affordable housing to ... populations that are especially vulnerable to homelessness.” This strategy is based on the research that shows that preventing homelessness costs communities much less than dealing with homelessness once it occurs. Far from saving tax-payer dollars, the proposed rule would in fact cost communities more, while creating worse outcomes for the affected individuals.

“We all share the concern that millions of U.S. households struggle to find affordable housing in the ongoing nationwide housing crisis, but blaming struggling immigrant families will not fix this problem,” said Eric Tars, Legal Director for the Law Center. “The real issue is the lack of

sufficient funding to ensure that every family, regardless of immigration status, has access to one of the most basic of human rights—a safe place to call home.”

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[The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty](#) (the Law Center) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness. With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.