



Public Comment Mini-Toolkit

Fight against the Department of Homeland Security's proposed Public Charge rule!

Guide for helping people to comment

How this toolkit works

Petitions and letter-writing campaigns are common tools used to influence law and policy makers. However, when a federal agency tries to put in place a new rule, such strategies are not the best method. In the case of a proposed rule, it is most effective to participate in the public comment period and inspire others to do so, too! Submitting a public comment can be as easy as signing a petition. This mini-toolkit will help you create an effective public comment campaign.

About the Department of Homeland Security's "public charge" proposed rule:

The Department of Homeland Security's proposed rule to expand the definition of what it means to be a public charge would drastically reshape who we welcome as newcomers to our society. The proposed rule makes immigrants face a battery of tests with one central goal: making America only open to the wealthy. In addition to a wealth test, immigrants have to show things like their credit score and education. The administration isn't trying to measure potential; they are putting up barriers to favor more affluent applicants.

Don't forget!

The public comment period is
Oct. 10-Dec. 10, 2018

Previously, the government only restricted immigration applications on public charge grounds if it determined an immigrant would likely depend on public cash assistance or need long-term medical care in an institution at the government's expense. Now, the bar will be much higher and impossible for many average, hardworking people to overcome.

Under the proposed rule, receipt of an expanded list of public benefits will also be counted against a person. Our society has already determined that immigrants should be able to receive these benefits to help keep all families fed, healthy and sheltered. It protects public health, ensures that children thrive, and is good for our community as a whole. Now, families will be faced with impossible decisions—immigration status that keeps your family stable and protected from deportation or food, healthcare and housing.

With one in four American children having at least one immigrant parent, this issue touches millions. Stripping well-rooted families of their basic needs is not a humane or economically justifiable policy. It is tantamount to selling the American Dream to the highest bidder.

The federal rulemaking process

With some exceptions, the law requires that the public have an opportunity to weigh in on federal agency rules. This is known as the public comment period. Typically, the public has between 30 and 60 days to submit comments on a proposed regulation. There may also be public meetings to collect information and communicate with stakeholders who are affected by the rule. Federal agencies must review all the comments they receive before creating a final rule, which then becomes law. Public comment is not a vote. Agencies are not required to throw out a rule if they receive more opposing than supporting comments or visa versa. However, public comments with important new information, significant questions or policy arguments could cause the agency to reconsider and revise the rule. The sheer volume of comments can also help slow the process or otherwise create change. Volume is the strategy behind this toolkit!

Five easy steps to an effective public comment campaign:

1 Location: Set up a table at your place of worship, community center, college campus or other gathering place. Make sure to get permission first.

2 Materials: Bring a stack of printed public comment templates (page 5), several copies of the “about public charge” page (page 3) several copies of the sample comments page (page 4), a few copies of the table sign for advertising (page 6), envelopes, tape, stamps, scissors and pens. You can also collect comments to send in a single, big envelope and deal with postage later if that’s easier. Make sure that you are the one mailing the comments so they don’t get lost or delayed.

You can include an online option at your table. Bring a few laptops that people can use, or have them try their smartphones. Submit comments at: www.regulations.gov/document?D=USCIS-2010-0012-0001

3 Advertise: Try to advertise your event ahead of time. You could ask people to bring their own stamped envelope (but have supplies available just in case). Use the advertising flyer (page 6) and social media.

4 Track: Count up the comments you make and submit them at cliniclegal.org/public-charge/speak-up

5 Share: Take photos of your event and share on social media to inspire others to get involved! Tag CLINIC in your post using [@cliniclegal](https://twitter.com/cliniclegal). You can empower people far beyond your community and show them how to make their voices heard, too. When sharing use the hashtags #FamiliesBelongTogether, #ProtectFamilies or #ImmigrantsWelome. Always keep others’ privacy and safety in mind when sharing information on social media.

Why do this?

The public comment process is an example of our democracy at work! It is an effective way to push back against this callous and cruel rule that would force families to choose between the stability of their immigration status and protection from deportation or the benefits they need to keep their families healthy, fed and sheltered. In doing so, the administration would pass on these costs to our communities, local social services and emergency rooms. Children having enough food to focus in school, the general public health, and whether people in our communities are able to afford housing affects us all. In addition to these tangible costs, the proposed rule undermines the American Dream. It would mean that America is only open to the affluent. You should do this because you can make a real difference. This is your chance to speak up for families who desperately need you not to remain silent.

Need more information? Get our free resource *Defend Immigrants by Taking Part in the Federal Rulemaking Process* at cliniclegal.org/resources/defend-immigrants-taking-part-federal-rulemaking-process.



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Want to do more? Visit cliniclegal.org/public-charge.

Sample Comments

We strongly encourage you not to copy the sample comments below word for word, and instead use them as a guide to create your own unique comment. **Comments must be submitted in English.**

I oppose the proposed rule “Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds” because:

- I object to this proposed rule, which is essentially a wealth test for hardworking immigrants striving to achieve the American Dream. It has not been proven that the new public charge tests immigrants would have to pass, such as a credit history check, English proficiency, or education, have any actual bearing on their potential. They seem more like barriers to prevent less affluent applicants from entering. No changes should be made and the current definition of public charge should remain in place.
- No family should have to make the choice between immigration status, stability and protection or receiving public benefits that keep their families fed, healthy and sheltered. This proposed rule would hurt families and the communities they live in, forcing localities to try to meet these vital humanitarian needs through social services, if any are available.
- Public benefits exist to help all hardworking families in America who need a little assistance to make ends meet. Placing this insurmountable barrier between immigrant families and the safety net could have disastrous effects on these families. Affected immigrants with manageable chronic conditions may be forced to abandon their health coverage, such as Medicaid or Medicare, in order to protect their families, leading to reliance on emergency rooms and other public health consequences.
- In addition to the societal consequences related to families affected by the rule, the rule’s chilling effect will make the resulting crises even greater. Immigrants afraid that the rule may apply to them or affect their status in the future may withdraw from benefits, impacting the health and well-being of their family members and communities.
- The proposed rule is inhumane, affecting families’ ability to access SNAP in order to get the adequate food and nutrition they need in order to maintain immigration status. Hunger and malnutrition affects a person’s ability to focus, function, and fight off disease. Hunger is already a serious problem in the United States. A proposal to add to this epidemic is against the public interest and the progression of our society.

Public comments must be postmarked by the submission deadline: Dec. 10, 2018

Mailing address

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Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20529-2140

Docket Number: USCIS-2010-0012

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Submit a public comment against a rule that would hurt millions of immigrant families.

Stop by to learn more against the administration's proposed "public charge" rule that would place a wealth-test on immigrants striving to achieve the American Dream.

Your voice is needed now!



Your voice matters!

**Submit a public comment
against a rule that
would hurt millions of
immigrant families here!**