



Alliance for Immigrant Survivors Public Charge Toolkit

Introduction

The Alliance for Immigrant Survivors (AIS) is a network of advocates and allies dedicated to defending and advocating for policies that ensure immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and other gender-based abuses have access to life-saving protections that all survivors of violence deserve. Also known as the National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence (NTF) Immigration Subcommittee, we are active members of the NTF looking to invite other advocates to join with us to serve as a united voice that centers immigrant survivors.

On October 10, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) posted a proposed “public charge” regulation (a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) in the federal register, asking the public to submit comments by December 10, 2018, before it becomes final. The extreme proposal would mark a significant and harmful departure from a longstanding policy in which the government has recognized that work supports like health care, nutrition, and housing assistance help immigrant families thrive and remain safe and productive. These essential programs that allow individuals to provide for basic needs will now count against the individual in deciding whether she is likely to become a public charge and is therefore ineligible for a green card.

AIS is concerned about how these dangerous changes will impact immigrant communities, particularly certain immigrant survivors of gender-based violence and their families, including children, who use public assistance programs to escape and overcome abuse. In fact, publication of the proposed rule has unfortunately already deterred survivors who are exempted from it from accessing critical services. AIS is supporting the [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) (PIF) campaign which has the infrastructure and capacity to respond to the rule change with collective force. AIS will utilize PIF resources while modifying the messaging to center immigrant survivors and their families and share widely with the NTF and other stakeholders to help strengthen our impact. *This toolkit is meant to be an internal guide for advocates, please don't post or share on social media.*

Contents

- AIS Topline Messages
- AIS Social Media Posts

AIS Topline Messages

If finalized, this regulation would be a significant and harmful departure from the current policy

Values: family, safety, safe/strong communities, wellbeing, resiliency, child welfare

Topline Messages:

- Everyone in our communities should be able to live without fear of domestic violence and sexual assault.
 - Access to health care, housing, food assistance, and other supports play a pivotal role in helping victims escape and overcome domestic violence and sexual assault.
- The use of cash assistance is already used against certain survivors applying for a green card. The harmful rule would further undermine efforts by victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to secure essential services that enable them to escape from or overcome abuse.
 - Without sufficient resources, victims are either compelled back into an abusive relationship, or face destitution and homelessness.
 - The impacts on victims and their children have long term implications for the health and safety of our communities at large.
- Some immigrant survivors are exempted from the public charge rule, including those who apply for a green card under the Violence Against Women Act and Trafficking Victims Protection Act. However, there are many survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, along with their families, who seek immigration status under other categories who will be impacted.
 - The proposed rule does not penalize adults for use of benefits by their children, however, even U.S. born victims and victims who already have legal status are concerned that their own or their children's use of services to escape and recover from abuse will disadvantage their immigrating family members.
- All families need food, medical care, housing, and other basic services to thrive and contribute to their communities and our country.
 - This rule would jeopardize vital food, housing, medical, and other basic assistance for families, keeping victims trapped in harmful situations.
 - Due to concerns about the impact of the public charge rule on themselves and their families, many immigrant victims are starting to avoid obtaining critical benefits such as food stamps and children's health insurance.
 - We'll see the costs of dropping critical benefits in long-term health consequences from unmitigated injury and trauma that will impact survivors, their families, and the broader community.
- We believe in communities that support safety and resiliency for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. When families thrive, so do our communities and our country.
 - The public charge rule serves to punish survivors for the abuse they've experienced. Forcing survivors to choose between either seeking services to help overcome abuse, or foregoing services in order to secure lawful status, re-victimizes survivors and their children, prevents recovery, and prolongs ongoing trauma.

- We can't build stronger communities when our government purposely puts the health and wellbeing of immigrant families at risk, including immigrant survivors of gender-based violence.

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AIS Social Media Posts – Facebook & Twitter

The sample social media posts below aim to center immigrant survivors in the campaign to voice our strong opposition to the proposed “public charge” rule expansion. You are welcome to edit the content to localize and customize as you wish.

Key Resources

- New AIS Website: <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/>
- AIS Take Action – Stop Threat to Immigrant Survivors: <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors>
- Sample Public Charge comments specific to domestic violence and sexual assault survivors: <http://bit.ly/AIS-Public-Charge-Sample-Comments>
- Advisory: How Will ‘Public Charge’ Proposed Policy Changes Impact Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault?, Grace Huang, J.D., Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, October 2018: <http://bit.ly/Public-Charge-DVSA>
- NTF Media Release (issued before publication of rule): <http://bit.ly/NTF-Public-Charge-Media>
- Hashtag: #ProtectFamilies

Sample Facebook Posts

Facebook Post #1

The administration has proposed a harmful expansion to the “public charge” rule that will put certain immigrant survivors of violence at risk of deportation if they use public programs to escape abuse and meet basic needs like food, housing, and health care. The rule would undermine efforts by victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to secure essential services that help them to escape from or overcome abuse. Find out more about how this rule impacts survivors in this @apigbv advisory: <http://bit.ly/Public-Charge-DVSA> #ProtectFamilies

Facebook Post #2

We strongly oppose any change to the public charge rule that punishes victims for having been victimized or deters survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault from accessing critical protections they need to escape or recover from abuse.

Particularly when minimum wage work already places families well below the poverty level, safety-net benefits help survivors afford the basics, such as food, housing, and healthcare, and helps them rebuild their lives after violence. Access to services and economic supports helps victims make the difficult decision as to whether and how they can afford to leave a dangerous situation, and in planning how to keep themselves and their children healthy, well, and housed. Raise your voice and submit a comment today: <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors> #ProtectFamilies

Select allies to tag, if desired:

@NTFSDV
@TahirihJusticeCenter
@apigbv
@FuturesWithoutViolence
@casadeesperanzamn
@NNEDV
@NationalCoalitionAgainstDomesticViolence
@endsxlvioence
@NationalDomesticViolenceHotline

Sample Tweets

Access to #healthcare, housing, food assistance & other essential supports play a pivotal role in helping victims escape and overcome #domesticviolence & #sexualassault. <http://bit.ly/Public-Charge-DVSA>
@NTFSDV #ProtectFamilies #MeToo

#PublicCharge proposal would undermine efforts by victims of #domesticviolence & #sexualassault to secure essential services that help them escape from or overcome abuse.

<https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors> #ProtectFamilies

The #PublicCharge rule has the effect of punishing immigrant survivors for having experienced #DomesticViolence or #SexualAssault. Submit your comment today!

<https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors> #ProtectFamilies

Out of concern about impact of #PublicCharge on themselves & their families, many immigrant victims of gender-based violence are starting to avoid obtaining critical benefits. This will have long-term health consequences for survivors that ultimately impact us all. <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors> #ProtectFamilies

Forcing survivors to choose between either seeking services to help overcome abuse, or foregoing services in order to secure lawful status, re-victimizes survivors and their children, prevents recovery, and prolongs ongoing trauma. <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors>
#ProtectFamilies

We can't build stronger communities when our government purposely puts the health & wellbeing of immigrant families at risk, including survivors of gender-based violence. Speak up and submit your comment today <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors>
#ProtectFamilies

We won't build a brighter future by literally starving children. Join our fight to defeat the #PublicCharge rule and #ProtectFamilies: <https://www.immigrantsurvivors.org/stop-threat-to-immigrant-survivors>

We believe in an America that supports parents who seek the best for their children. When families thrive, so do our communities and our country. #ProtectFamilies
<https://www.protectingimmigrantfamilies.org>

Select allies to tag, if desired:

[@4ImmSurvivors](#)

@NTFSDV

@casadeesperanza

@tahirihjustice

@WithoutViolence

@apigbv

@NCADV

@nnedv

@endsxlvioence

@ndvh

@NRCDV

@NILC_org

@CLASP_DC

@WomenBelong

@ILRC_SF

@FWD_us

@AmericasVoice

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