



**Greater Chicago Food Depository
Statement on Public Charge Rule Change
August 12, 2019**

The Greater Chicago Food Depository strongly opposes the Trump administration’s “Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds” rule change, which will add participation in federal nutrition programs to the list of factors that may be negatively counted against individuals seeking lawful residency or citizenship, thereby discouraging immigrants and their families from seeking food assistance.

The rule change, announced Monday to take effect on October 15, seeks to deny legal residency or U.S. citizenship based on the likelihood of a person receiving public benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or housing assistance.

Under current federal immigration policy, officials may deny entry or legal permanent residency to immigrants on the basis that they are likely to become a public charge, or dependent on government benefits as their main source of support. Historically, officials considered receipt of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefits and Medicaid long-term care during case evaluation. The new rule broadens the definition of public charge to include a wider variety of public services, including SNAP and housing assistance.

Simply put, this rule change will increase hunger by discouraging participation in anti-hunger and anti-poverty programs. Since the rule was proposed in October 2018, the Food Depository and our partners have witnessed elevated fear within immigrant communities. Many families are reluctant to seek food assistance of any kind – regardless of whether a food program is impacted by the rule. This chilling effect will only increase as the rule goes into effect.

The Food Depository has stood firmly against this rule change since it was first announced. As a food bank that works to serve all our neighbors in need, we find it cruel and wrongheaded to use SNAP – our nation’s most effective anti-hunger program – to threaten an immigrant’s residency or path to citizenship. As part of the Protecting Immigrant Families Illinois coalition, we encouraged our advocates, partners and supporters to submit public comments in opposition. In fact, the final rule was published with an acknowledgement that the vast majority of comments submitted opposed the rule.

At the Food Depository, we believe that no person should go hungry, regardless of their immigration status or nation of origin. In partnership with a local network of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and programs, we are committed to offering food and dignity to anyone in need.

On behalf of our partners and the people we serve, the Food Depository urges the Trump administration to rescind this rule.

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