

For Immediate Release

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Washtenaw County Opposes Proposed Federal Public Charge Rule Changes

Proposed changes would leave many without basic food and medical care

YPSILANTI, Mich., Nov. 28, 2018 – The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners has passed a [resolution](#) opposing proposed changes to federal public charge rules. The proposed changes would redefine “public charge” – a legal term used to reject immigrants applying for green cards or temporary visas – to include anyone who accesses any of a number of vital health, nutrition and housing programs. The resolution makes clear that these changes are inconsistent with our county’s values, and would be harmful both to immigrants and our entire community.

“We value immigrants in our community,” says Andy LaBarre, Chair of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. “The proposed public charge rule changes go against our values of opportunity, diversity, and humanitarian concern for people in our community.”

The resolution highlights how “immigrants make substantial contributions to the local community in diversity, cultural understanding, education, innovation and employment, and the proposed rule ignores these contributions by barring all but the wealthiest from immigrating.”

More than one in 10 Washtenaw County residents are immigrants. The proposed rule will prevent many of these families from accessing federal benefits like Medicaid, SNAP (food stamps), and Section 8 housing. The resolution says this will leave people without basic food and medical care.

Widespread confusion about which benefits are and are not included in a public charge determination has already led to families avoiding programs that are not part of this proposed rule out of concern that any government program could cause problems for them.

The effects of the proposed public charge rule changes extend beyond noncitizens who would be directly affected by the proposed rule, according to the resolution. For example, fear of using public health programs could increase the chances of a public health crisis.

The Washtenaw County Board of Health passed a similar resolution.

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Health will submit comments before the rule can become final and will send the resolution to the Washtenaw County congressional delegation, the Governor of the State of Michigan, and state representatives and senators. Individuals and agencies can submit comments to the Department of Homeland Security [here](#) until December 10, 2018.

“We want immigrants to feel welcome in Washtenaw County,” says LaBarre. “I’m glad the Board voted unanimously to oppose these changes.”

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Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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