

September 27, 2019

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Senator Hirono,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing the Protect American Values Act (S. 2482).

The Trump Administration's new public charge rule, finalized on August 12th, 2019 despite historic public opposition, imposes sweeping changes to long-standing, bipartisan immigration policy that jeopardizes America's future and intensifies the challenges faced by immigrant families and children.

Children of immigrants are the fastest-growing group of children in the country, and approximately one in four (8 million) children live in a family with at least one immigrant parent. Therefore, the administration's rule to expand who may be deemed a public charge (i.e., burden on the public coffers) in the consideration of an application for lawful permanent resident status or lawful admission would jeopardize our country's economic future by targeting access to health care, nutrition assistance, and housing support for this fast-growing population.

This rule directly threatens millions of children's access to essential programs including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance, and Public Housing. In addition, we know that families with children are already disenrolling or forgoing many other benefits not directly mentioned in this rule out of fear of negative repercussions to their immigration status.

The rule also directly discriminates against children on multiple fronts. Under the rule, being under the age of 18 would be considered a "negative factor" in public charge determinations. Family size would also be considered in determinations, which would needlessly punish families with multiple children.

Furthermore, there is no way to hurt immigrant parents without also harming their children. Children in households where parents are limited from accessing critical benefits will suffer from a loss of income and resources to the household that supports their healthy development.

This rule runs counter to the values of the United States and is both morally reprehensible and economically foolish. Children are, quite literally, the future of our country and this rule imperils some of the most vulnerable among them. We applaud your leadership in standing up to this cruel and misguided rule and look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President

