

September 12, 2019

Dear California Philanthropic Institutions,

As home to 11 million immigrants – more than any other state – California has long benefited from immigrants’ contributions to its economy and its communities. Yet in recent months, families’ health and well-being have been jeopardized by a federal effort that will deter immigrants from receiving services that help them meet basic human needs such as health care, food, and housing, undermining their ability to remain strong, productive, and stable.

With the [finalization of a new federal “public charge” rule](#), set to go into effect on October 15, **we urge all funders in California to join us in signing onto this letter**, committing to fight against this rule that will drive families away from critical services they are legally eligible to receive. United together, we can help create the vibrant, inclusive California we all believe is possible.

**We believe that philanthropy has a vital role to play in directly helping affected children and families and in driving lasting change. This includes rapid response funding for organizations conducting outreach and education as well as providing direct services to affected children and families; supporting efforts by researchers to monitor, document, and study the harm caused by the rule changes; helping to build a long-term movement infrastructure; and supporting advocates in their efforts to reduce or reverse harmful policies at the federal level.**

Representing foundations located across California and serving a wide variety of communities in our state, we support improving health care, building strong communities, immigrant integration, and many other issues. We are deeply concerned about how the new “public charge” rule could erode decades of hard-fought progress by our grantees and longtime investments in each of those areas.<sup>1</sup> According to a [recent analysis](#) by the California Budget & Policy Center, the new rule could lead to 165,000 more Californians being pushed into poverty as they are likely to avoid CalFresh food assistance and the housing subsidies they need, and the state losing out on \$1.67 billion in federal benefits that help the state’s economy.

The simple rumor of a potential rule change quickly led to a “chilling effect” as human service providers reported families disenrolling from programs they are eligible for because they fear potential consequences on their immigration status.<sup>2</sup> Up to 765,000 immigrants in California

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<sup>1</sup> The “public charge” rule is used by immigration officials to decide whether a person can enter the United States or get a green card. To determine a person’s likelihood of becoming reliant on government support in the future, officials look at a person’s circumstance and whether that person has used specific benefit programs in the previous three years. The new rule defining this term significantly broadens the range of programs to Medicaid, public housing, and food assistance (exceptions to the rule include emergency Medicaid and Medicaid for pregnant women and children under 21).

<sup>2</sup> Already, in 2018, overall child enrollment in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) dropped more than 828,000 (2.2 percent) nationally and more than 150,000 (3 percent) in California, according to the [Georgetown University Center for Children and Families](#). Before the final rule was published, [local](#) and [national](#) news outlets reported that immigrant families were already asking to be disenrolled from supplemental nutrition and health insurance benefits. [The Migration Policy Institute](#) and the [Los Angeles Times](#) have published pieces that detail many of the ways the final rule is anticipated to have a chilling effect on families accessing resources.

could drop nutrition assistance and health insurance due to the rule and almost 70 percent of those losing benefits would be children, according to [an estimate](#) by UCLA, UC Berkeley, and California Food Policy Advocates. The Children's Partnership has also analyzed the [potential impact by county](#), and the California Association of Food Banks has [warned of increasing hunger](#) that could result across California.

In the face of federal anti-immigrant actions, California has consistently charted a different course. [Governor Newsom](#) and the [California Health and Human Services Secretary](#) have criticized changes to the federal public charge policy that would restrict access to vital social programs. We applaud the [state of California](#), the [counties of San Francisco and Santa Clara](#), and the [advocacy groups](#) who are suing to block the public charge rule before it takes effect in mid-October.

Last year more than 30 foundations across California opposed the rule after it was first proposed, and more than 266,000 people and organizations submitted comments overwhelmingly opposing it. Despite the resistance, the new version of the rule has been put in place and will go into effect in October.

For more information on how you can help affected children and families, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees' [website](#) helpfully includes a range of ways to support organizations tackling both rapid response work and larger strategic efforts. Whatever path we each choose, we are committed to doing our part.

No one should be forced to choose between necessities such as food, housing, and health care, and their future. We stand with immigrant families and are working towards a day when all Californians have opportunities to thrive.

**If you are a California funder who shares these beliefs, we urge you to join us in our commitment to secure the communities, success, and future of our state by signing onto this letter. For information on how to join, please contact Deb Kong at [dkong@packard.org](mailto:dkong@packard.org).**

Signed:

Claire M. Solot, Managing Director  
Bigglesworth Family Foundation

Ray Baxter, President and CEO  
Blue Shield of California Foundation

Antonia Hernández, President and CEO  
California Community Foundation

Peter Laugharn, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

James W. Head, President & CEO  
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Deanna S. Gomby, Ph.D., M.S., President and CEO  
Heising-Simons Foundation

Jacqueline Martinez Garcel, CEO  
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Ellen LaPointe, President and CEO  
Northern California Grantmakers

Adrienne Wittenberg, Executive Director  
S. Mark Taper Foundation

Debbie McKeon, President and CEO  
San Diego Grantmakers

Chet P. Hewitt, President and CEO  
Sierra Health Foundation and The Center

Nicole Taylor, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Silicon Valley Community Foundation

Christine Essel, President and CEO  
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Eugene Stein, President  
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Carol S. Larson, President and CEO  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Leslie Dorosin and Rebekah Saul Butler, Co-Executive Directors  
The Grove Foundation

Michele Lew, CEO  
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Nancy L. Wiltsek, Executive Director  
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