



205 S. Broadway, Suite 402
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213.482.8200
www.cfpa.net

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N St. Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: ACR 1 (Bonta)—Relative to the Immigration and Nationality Act – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Gómez Reyes:

California Food Policy Advocates is pleased to support ACR 1 (Bonta), which would condemn the public charge regulations proposed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and urge the federal government to reconsider and rollback the proposed DHS regulations. ACR 1 defends the well-being of California immigrants—invaluable members of our state—against the targeted anti-immigrant rhetoric of the federal government.

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Drawing on our core understanding that there are many social, political, and economic determinants of poverty, food insecurity, and poor health, CFPA employs a variety of advocacy strategies to fulfill our mission.

The current DHS proposed regulations would expand the provisions of “public charge” to include essential benefits such as Medicaid, Medicare Part D, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Section 8 housing vouchers, and other federally subsidized housing programs. This moves the definition beyond the three previous guidelines which considered only critical cash assistance: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and long-term medical care. In addition, the proposed changes add harsh standards for personal circumstances and discriminate against individuals with limited English proficiency, limited education, low incomes and either being a child or senior. Individuals who access any of the services, which fall within the newly proposed guidelines, are now faced with the decision of having to choose between providing for the immediate needs of their families or retaining the opportunity to become lawful residents in the future.

This policy is not only cruel, it's counterproductive. In California, more than 49 percent of CalFresh participants are in working families, but their low wages still won't afford them what they need to get ahead.¹ These are our home health care aides, child care workers, cashiers, cooks, restaurant servers, janitors, and security guards. They pay taxes, educate their children, and participate in the economy, but receive low pay and few benefits for their labor. SNAP helps these families put food on the table, while freeing up earned income for other essential items, like diapers and medication. In doing so, SNAP lifted 8.4 million people above the poverty line in 2015—including 3.8 million children.² The resulting reduction in financial stress helps people focus on moving forward, rather than staying afloat. Enacting this change won't just hurt immigrants—it would drive entire communities deeper into poverty and hunger.

In addition to the devastating impact on immigrant families and communities of color, the proposed expansion will also place a burdensome financial impact on the state of California. A recent UCLA Center for Health Policy Research study found that the proposed public charge changes could cost California's economy, which prides itself in being the 5th largest economy in the world, an estimated \$2.8 billion and 17,700 jobs.³ If disenrollment continues, the effects will be long lasting as disenrollment primarily hurts children, who make up 70% of those losing benefits.⁴

For these reasons California Food Policy Advocates urges you to support ACR 1 (Bonta).

Sincerely,



Gabrielle Tilley
Policy Advocate

Cc: The Honorable Rob Bonta
Members of the Assembly Human Services Committee

1. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/who-are-the-low-income-childless-adults-facing-the-loss-of-snap-in-2016>
2. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/chart-book-economic-security-and-health-insurance>
3. <https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/search/pages/detail.aspx?PubID=1789>
4. Ibid.