

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TPCA Statement on Final Public Charge Rule

(NASHVILLE, Tenn.) -- On August 14, the Trump administration announced the final version of a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) final rule that expands the categories of public benefits considered under the definition of public charge, which will affect the admissibility of immigrants into the U.S. and changes in immigrants' legal immigration status. The rule is set to take effect on October 15, 2019.

As the membership organization for community health centers in Tennessee, the Tennessee Primary Care Association (TPCA) advocates for community health centers and the 437,000 patients they serve, some of whom are immigrants. Health centers provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care to meet the unique health care needs of all patients; access to affordable care improves the health and well-being of patients and their families and allows them to fully participate in their communities. By mission and federal mandate, health centers provide high-quality, comprehensive care to underserved and vulnerable populations and accept all patients that come through their doors.

The new rule adds SNAP and non-emergency Medicaid to benefits that will be considered when determining public charge status. Given that health center patients may also utilize these benefits, TPCA is concerned that the new rule will deter immigrant patients and their families from seeking care at community health centers and other health care providers, which will result in poorer health outcomes and increase the cost of care. TPCA believes the consequences of the new rule will work in contradiction to the mission of health centers. As the rule is implemented, TPCA will continue to work closely with partner organizations in fulfilling our mission to improve access to primary health care as the voice of Tennessee's community health centers.