

Higher Education Leaders Call Proposed “Public Charge” Rule Harmful and Counterproductive for Immigrants and the Country

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Washington, D.C.— The Department of Homeland Security has proposed regulations that would penalize low-income immigrants, who receive or who are “likely to receive” public benefits, such as health, housing, and food assistance, that are critical to ensuring they enroll and succeed in higher education. Under the proposed rule, which substantially expands the definition of “public charge,” legally authorized immigrants who access basic nutrition, housing, and health programs, could jeopardize their chances of obtaining green cards or restrict any future opportunities to change or upgrade their immigration status. As researchers have shown, these proposed regulations will produce fear and confusion as lawful immigrants decide to forego enrollment for themselves and their families in these programs out of fear of harming their future eligibility to stay permanently in this country.

These changes will bring real and lasting harm to the health and well being of immigrant students, children, parents, and families. Over a quarter of undergraduate students in our country are immigrants or children of immigrants. While Pell Grants and other non-cash benefits that provide education, child development, employment, and job training are not included in the specified public benefits, we believe the proposed regulations would have damaging consequences, affecting students, families, and campuses across the nation. As educators and leaders of higher education institutions and organizations, we know that when students and their families are unable to meet core living and housing needs or face higher costs, the students are less likely to pursue and continue with their educational and career pathways.

Nancy Cantor, Chancellor of Rutgers University-Newark and Co-Chair of the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration stated, “We see immigrant students working hard every day to reach their full potential, eager to contribute to our communities and country. But, these proposed rules and harsh effects will harm immigrants and their families, and result in significantly diminished prospects for immigrant student success. This is not who we are as a nation.”

“The pursuit of post-secondary education as well as associated English Language Learner (ELL), job-training, career pathway and certificate programs significantly bolster immigrants’ future successes, economic mobility and societal contributions,” added Mark Mitsui, President, Portland Community College, and a member of both the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education and the Presidents’ Alliance, “These unnecessary and counterproductive regulations will result in young immigrant students facing increased barriers to post-secondary education, and could deter hardworking adult learners from participating in workforce training,

certification and ELL programs. All members of our community must be able to access the care, services and supports needed to be healthy and productive."

The Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education and the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration have joined with over 1,000 organizations and the Protect Immigrant Families Campaign urging the Administration to withdraw these harmful proposed regulations, and to work instead to build on the successes of our immigrant students and their families, and support the contributions of hardworking immigrant communities. Once the regulations are formally published in the Federal Register, we will work with our higher education partners to encourage colleges and universities across the country to submit comment letters detailing the impact of the proposed regulations on their students and campuses.

The non-partisan **Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration** brings together college and university leaders dedicated to increasing public understanding of how immigration policies and practices impact our students, campuses and communities, and supporting policies that create a welcoming environment for undocumented, immigrant, and international students. The Alliance is comprised of over 420 presidents and chancellors of public and private colleges and universities, serving over four million students in 41 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

The **Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education** is a national network of community colleges and other professional organizations committed to increasing educational and career opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. CCCIE builds the capacity of community colleges to accelerate immigrant and refugee success and raises awareness of the essential role these colleges play in advancing immigrant integration through education. CCCIE's work is guided by a Blue Ribbon Panel of community college leaders, representing over 50 colleges serving an estimated 1.2 million students.

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