



A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE PROPOSED FEDERAL PUBLIC CHARGE RULE CHANGES

Mountain Family Health Centers Board of Directors
November 27, 2018

Mountain Family Health Centers is a Community Health Center in Western Colorado that provides affordable, integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health care to more than 20,000 individuals, the majority of whom have family incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level (less than \$24,280 in annual income).

The United States federal government is proposing changes to the "public charge" rules. Currently the definition of public charge is a person who has become or is likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence. Under the current policy, the only benefits considered in the public charge test are cash assistance and government-funded long-term institutional care.

On October 10, 2018, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published proposed rule changes in the federal register that would drastically change the definition of public charge to apply to anyone who is likely to use more than a minimal amount of cash, health, nutrition or housing programs.

The proposed rule will prevent families from accessing federal benefits like Medicaid health insurance coverage, the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), or affordable housing vouchers (Section 8) for low-income families, leaving many without basic access to food, shelter or healthcare.

Within MFHC's service area, we have seen the chilling effect of the proposed rule changes, as thousands of our patients have become uninsured over the past year, due in part to fear of the proposed rule changes. Patients without health insurance often forgo preventative care and use expensive hospital emergency rooms as a last resort, driving up healthcare costs across the community. Uninsured patients also often forgo treatment for communicable diseases, increasing the chances of a public health crisis for all residents.

Mountain Family Health Centers believes access to affordable healthcare is a human right. Proposed rule changes that decrease access to affordable health insurance coverage and care are inconsistent with our values.

Mountain Family Health Centers embraces diversity. Proposed rule changes that disproportionately impact immigrant families, minority populations, and female-led households are inconsistent with our values.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mountain Family Health Centers Board of Directors hereby opposes the proposed public charge regulation (a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking) published in the federal register on October 10, 2018.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mountain Family Health Centers Board of Directors will submit comments calling for the withdrawal of this proposed rule before the rule becomes final.