



December 10 2018

Samantha Deshommes, Chief
Regulatory Coordination Division, Office of Policy and Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20529-2140

Re: DHS Docket No. USCIS-2010-0012, RIN 1615-AA22, Comments in Response to Proposed Rulemaking: Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds

Dear Ms. Deshommes:

I am writing on behalf of Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. (POAH) in response to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to express our strong opposition to the changes regarding "public charge," published in the Federal Register on October 10, 2018 (CIS No. 2499-10; DHS Docket No. USCIS-2010-0012).

POAH is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve, create and sustain affordable, healthy homes that support economic security and access to opportunity for all. Since its founding in 2001, POAH has successfully preserved or built more than 10,000 units of affordable rental housing in 11 states and the District of Columbia at more than 100 properties. A significant share of POAH's residents – across all ages and backgrounds, including noncitizens legally eligible for assistance – are assisted by Project-Based Rental Assistance or Housing Choice Vouchers, two programs impacted by the proposed rule.

POAH is deeply concerned that the proposed rule, which would extend the public charge test to examine whether an applicant uses or receives certain federal housing assistance, will discourage certain noncitizen households from accessing federal housing assistance which they need and for which they are legally eligible, with detrimental effects both for households immediately effected and for the wider community.

Stable affordable housing is the essential foundation for the American dream. Conversely, housing instability has documented negative impacts on health, educational performance, economic participation, and numerous other measures of life success. Discouraging legally eligible noncitizens from accessing affordable housing will have serious negative long-term impacts on these households – including on their children.

Beyond our primary concern for the well-being of the households directly impacted by the proposed rule, we anticipate numerous detrimental secondary impacts. Many of the negative effects imposed on households by lack of access to stable affordable housing also appear as increased costs to the public sector, through increased costs to the health, education, criminal justice, and other sectors. American society also bears the cost of housing-unstable households' reduced economic output. These social costs are especially

severe and long-term with regard to housing-unstable children, since the negative impacts on educational and economic outcomes persist over entire lifetimes.

POAH anticipates other negative social impacts if the proposed rule is implemented, as well. Legal nonresidents represent a crucial segment of the construction labor pool; discouraging this population from accessing federal housing assistance would reduce their ability to maintain stable housing, especially in high-cost housing markets where labor shortages are already driving up construction costs. On the operating side, the proposed rule would place a burden on private housing landlords, who would need to assist impacted residents with the documentation regarding their history of benefit receipt required for the public charge evaluation process.

In sum, POAH strongly opposes the proposed rule's changes to the public charge test, because it would discourage some noncitizens from accessing federal housing assistance for which they are legally eligible, imposing significant costs on the households effected as well as on the broader community. We urge the rule to be withdrawn in its entirety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. If you have any questions, please contact me at (617) 449-1016 or aspofford@poah.org.

Sincerely,



Andrew Spofford
Chief of Staff
Preservation of Affordable Housing