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Joint Statement of America's Frontline Physicians Opposing Public Charge Final Rule

The Department of Homeland Security issued a final regulation that changes long-standing rules governing how and whether immigrants can be determined to be a "public charge;" widens the scope of programs considered by the government in making such a determination; and serves as a barrier to accessing health care for legal immigrants, as doing so can now serve as a basis for denying individuals green cards or U.S. visas.

In response, the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Osteopathic Association, American College of Physicians, and American Psychiatric Association, collectively representing more than 597,000 of America's frontline physicians, issued this statement:

Our organizations, which represent more than 597,000 physicians and medical students, are united in expressing our deep concern and opposition to the final public charge regulation issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The regulation upends decades of settled policy with regard to public charge and makes it much more likely that lawfully present immigrants may not seek health care, whether preventive services or treatment, when faced with illness, since doing so could be used to deny green cards or U.S. visas, or even lead to deportations.

Rather than face that threat, impacted patients currently served by our members almost certainly will avoid needed care from their trusted physicians, jeopardizing their own health and that of their communities. Many of our members have already witnessed this chilling effect among their own patient populations, with patients avoiding health services and programs out of fear. The public charge final rule not only threatens our patients' health, but as this deferred care leads to more complex medical and public health challenges, it will also

significantly increase costs to the health care system and U.S. taxpayers. Most important, the order puts a governmental barrier between physicians and patients and stands in stark contrast to the mission our organizations share: ensuring meaningful access to health care for patients in need.

We urge DHS to rescind the public charge final rule and to work with us to ensure broader access, improved quality, and more affordable care for our patients.

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About the American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 134,600 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five office visits -- that's 192 million visits annually or 48 percent more than the next most visited medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. To learn more about the specialty of family medicine, the AAFP's positions on issues and clinical care, and for downloadable multi-media highlighting family medicine, visit www.aafp.org/media. For information about health care, health conditions and wellness, please visit the AAFP's award-winning consumer website, www.familydoctor.org.

About the American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds.

About the American College of Physicians

The [American College of Physicians](http://www.acponline.org) is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States with members in more than 145 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 154,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Follow ACP on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ACP), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ACP), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/ACP).

About the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (The College), a 501(c)(3) organization, is the nation's leading group of physicians providing health care for women. As a private, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization of more than 58,000 members, The College strongly advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women's health care. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), a 501(c)(6) organization, is its companion.

About the American Osteopathic Association

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) represents more than 145,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students; promotes public health; encourages scientific research; serves as the primary certifying body for DOs; and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. To learn more about DOs and the osteopathic philosophy of medicine, visit www.DoctorsThatDO.org.

About the American Psychiatric Association

The American Psychiatric Association, founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with more than 38,500 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses. APA's vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. For more information please visit www.psychiatry.org.