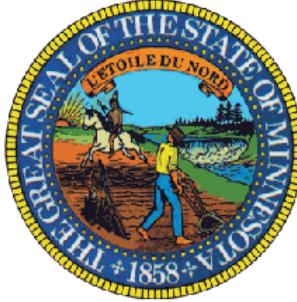


Minnesota House Of Representatives

State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155



Minnesota Senate

Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

October 13, 2021

Director Ur M. Jaddou, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Director Jaddou:

Minnesota is home to a vibrant, diverse immigrant community. New Americans in Minnesota are primarily people of color from Africa, Asia, and Latin America who have settled into communities across the state. They bring a strong work ethic and many immigrants in Minnesota fill critical jobs in health care, agriculture, food services, and sanitation. The COVID epidemic harshly impacted these jobs. Unable to perform their jobs from home, many immigrants became unemployed and suffered a loss of income.

The economic consequences of the pandemic-impacted families throughout Minnesota, many of whom are a mixture of native-born residents and immigrants. Approximately 20% of all children in Minnesota are members of an immigrant family. During the pandemic, food insecurity increased and more children went hungry – particularly in communities of color. State and local efforts to address food insecurity and housing instability were met with skepticism in mixed status/immigrant households. It's not uncommon for immigrant families to forego available services because they fear it will adversely impact their immigration situation. In outreach efforts to the community, government workers learned of widespread fear and misunderstanding of the “public charge rule.” For some members of the immigrant community, these fears were so significant that they chose not to use available and necessary services to ensure the wellbeing of their family and community. For example, pregnant mothers forewent pre-natal care, children missed well child visits, and families went hungry without the support of food programs. Some older children dropped out of school to search for work to help supplement the family income. These actions caused short-term suffering but also have long-term effects. For example, missed immunizations allow disease to take hold, and individuals who don't receive a high school education are more likely to face numerous hardships including poverty and illness that hurt the individual and cost the community.

Having seen the devastating impact of the overbroad and confusing public charge rule has upon the community, we applaud the administration's efforts to write a clear, fair, and comprehensive definition. We believe a narrowly tailored rule that is readily understandable to the immigrant

community, immigration officials who administer the rule, and state and local authorities who provide social services is of vital importance to the well-being of immigrants, their families, and the community at large.

We respectfully assert that a clear, fair, and comprehensive public charge rule must take into account the racial disparities in poverty across the United States. For example, the poverty rate among Minnesota's Black and Hispanic population was three to four times higher than the rates of Non-Hispanic White Minnesotans. The pandemic exacerbated these disparities, thwarting state efforts to close racial gaps in employment, education, and housing opportunities. The public charge rule should not be an impediment to local and state efforts to close economic gaps. A rule that enables racial inequities to endure is unjust and counter-productive. It is also contrary to the national interest. In November 2020, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development found that "(w)orking on solutions to address these disparities between the white population and populations of other races is not only the right thing to do, it's the necessary thing to do if the region is going to provide employers with the workforce needed for success." Rather, the public charge rule should allow families to obtain needed resources to close the historical gaps that exist because of systemic racism.

We respectfully urge you to adopt a rule that:

1. Makes clear that state and local efforts, including direct cash payments, housing assistance, food programs, education and training, and health subsidies to support the well-being of individuals and families are exempt from the public charge rule. The public charge rule should only apply to individuals who are primarily dependent upon federal cash assistance year to year or are institutionalized in long term care at federal expense. The public charge rule should never be applied to individuals who obtain federal, state, or local assistance to supplement their income or to bridge a period of hardship.
2. The application of the public charge rule should have temporal limitations. It cannot be used as a basis to speculate what the future may hold. Likewise, the receipt of benefits should be considered within the context of the events occurring at the time the benefits were received.
3. Because the public charge rule is used to deny visas that can result in the permanent separation of families, denials should be reviewable in court by a neutral arbiter of fact and law.

Sincerely,



Sandra Feist
State Representative, District 41B



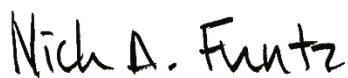
Ryan Winkler
House Majority Leader

/s/ Melisa López Franzen

Melisa López Franzen
Senate Minority Leader



Foung Hawj
Assistant Senate Minority Leader



Nick Frentz
Assistant Senate Minority Leader



Fue Lee
State Representative, District 59A



Mary Kunesh
State Senator, District 41



Alice Hausman
State Representative, District 66A



John Marty
State Senator, District 66



Mike Freiberg
State Representative, District 45B



Jamie Long
State Representative, District 61B



Sydney Jordan
State Representative, District 60A



Dave Pinto
State Representative, District 64B



Jay Xiong
State Representative, District 67B



Samantha Vang
State Representative, District 40B



Connie Bernardy
State Representative, District 41A



John Hoffman
State Senator, District 36



Frank Hornstein
State Representative, District 61A



Mohamud Noor
State Representative, District 60B



Jason Isaacson
State Senator, District 42



Sandra Pappas
State Senator, District 65



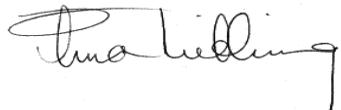
Jim Davnie
State Representative, District 63A

/s/ Patricia Torres Ray

Patricia Torres Ray
State Senator, District 63



Michael Howard
State Representative, District 50A



Tina Liebling
State Representative, District 26A



Jennifer A. McEwen
State Senator, District 7



Kari Dziedzic
State Senator, District 60

/s/ John Thompson

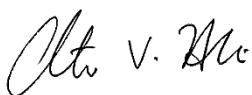
John Thompson
State Representative, District 67A



Sandra Masin
State Representative, District 51A



Hodan Hassan
State Representative, District 62A



Athena Hollins
State Representative, District 66B



Liz Reyer
State Representative, District 51B



Kaela Berg
State Representative, District 56B