

# Memorandum of **OPPOSITION**

## DHS Public Charge Proposal

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The New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) *opposes* changes proposed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to current public charge policy that would make it much more difficult for low and moderate-income immigrants who have at any point legally accessed public assistance to obtain a green card, extend or change their temporary status in the US, or apply for citizenship. Such a policy would dissuade immigrant parents from seeking proper medical care or nutritional sustenance that their children may need to be successful in school.

The proposal would expand the current public charge policy to include Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Public Housing. These programs are vital to families who cannot afford basic healthcare services, nutritious meals for their children or stable housing. Medicaid covers almost 37 million children nationwide. In fact, children make up almost half of all Medicaid beneficiaries. The 1.78 million Medicaid eligible children who access these services come to our schools better prepared to learn. When students arrive to class hungry or sick, they are unable to productively participate in educational programs. In fact, some of those same students may not even come to classes if they are too hungry or ill.

For over 30 years, public school districts have also depended on Medicaid funding. Nationwide, districts receive approximately \$4 billion in Medicaid funding each year. New York school districts receive more than \$270 million, \$136 million of which is funded federally. These funds help school districts provide critical health services to children, including vision and hearing screenings, psychological services, occupational and speech therapy, as well as diabetes and asthma diagnosis and management. Medicaid funding also helps offset costs for medically necessary services and equipment provided to children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). New York has over 250 approved and operating school-based health centers that rely heavily on Medicaid funding to remain solvent. The services these centers offer not only improve students' overall health; they also lead to fewer absences and improved academic performance. This funding is linked to the number of Medicaid eligible students enrolled.

It is critical that the federal government maintains a steady flow of funding to programs that support children's health and wellbeing. Medicaid and SNAP are just two such programs that provide essential services to children who otherwise would be in no condition to effectively engage in classroom discussions or adequately focus on assignments. Our students are our future. We must invest in them.

On July 12, 2019, DHS completed and forwarded a final rule on changes to Public Charge policy to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Before OMB takes final action, we urge all policymakers to weigh in and oppose this change, or take legislative action to intercede.

For additional information, please contact NYSSBA Governmental Relations at 518-783-0200.

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