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Supervisor Wilma Chan Urges Immigrants to Empower Themselves with Facts about “Public Charge”

*New Rule Could Cause Confusion about Benefits, Increase Family Separations in
Immigrant Communities*

Oakland, CA – Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan is seeking to inform County residents about an impending Trump Administration policy change scheduled to take effect on Monday, February 24th that could impact certain legal immigrants seeking permanent residency if they utilize vital government benefit programs.

The policy, known as the “Public Charge” designation, currently applies to certain immigrants that are reliant on cash assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (known as CalWORKs) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The new rule would expand this designation to include certain immigrant recipients of preventative health care, food assistance, and affordable housing programs, such as federally-funded Medicaid (Medi-Cal) for non-pregnant adults, SNAP (i.e. CalFresh), and Section 8. Many immigrants, however, are not impacted.

“It is important for individuals and families to continue receiving the support they need to be healthy, fed, and secure in their housing,” Supervisor Chan said. “We will do everything in our power to ensure that our communities have access to the resources and information necessary to withstand this anti-immigrant, anti-family, Trump Administration policy.”

In Alameda County, this rule could adversely impact immigrant families utilizing federally-funded Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and other assistance programs. At present, the County is home to approximately 65,500 households with at least one immigrant recipient of Medi-Cal or CalFresh. While few people are subject to the public charge test, misinformation and confusion about which benefits are included or which immigrants are impacted could cause many of these households to erroneously believe they are subject to the policy change.

By allowing the federal government to use these enrollments as a criteria for determining green card or VISA status, this change would force over 26 million people nationwide to choose between pursuing a legal path to citizenship and access to programs necessary for their family’s health and safety. The consequences of this law include preventing many law-abiding individuals from remaining in the United States, as well as further deepening inequities by increasing health disparities, poverty, unsafe housing, and nutritional deficits.

The County's Board of Supervisors, Social Services Agency (SSA), and Health Care Services Agency (HCSA) have compiled resources aimed at educating immigrant communities to ensure they continue to receive benefits they are eligible for and need. SSA has updated their Public Charge Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to reflect the final rule going into effect on February 24th. Those resources can be found on the SSA's Immigration Resources page: immigration.alamedasocialservices.org.

Individuals concerned this rule may affect them should seek qualified legal advice before applying for or withdrawing from benefits.

"Our residents should understand that information provided to SSA is confidential and only used to determine benefit eligibility," added Supervisor Chan. "The Federal government does not have access to the SSA's information for immigration enforcement, and California's eligibility rules for public assistance benefits will not change as a result of Public Charge."

Other resources include Screening Tools aimed at helping eligible immigrants keep their benefits:

- **Screening Web Tool (English):** <https://www.keepyourbenefitsca.org/en>
- **Screening Web Tool (Spanish):** www.tusbeneficiospublicos.org
- **Screening Text Tool:** 650-376-8006 Text "benefits" (for English), "libre" (for Spanish), "福利" (Chinese) or "lợi ích" (Vietnamese)

The following are a few local community-based legal service providers:

- **Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach:** (510) 251-2846
- **Bay Area Legal Aid:** (510) 663-4744
- **Catholic Charities of the East Bay:** (510) 437-1554
- **Centro Legal De La Raza:** (510) 437-1554
- **East Bay Community Law Center:** (510) 548-4040
- **International Institute of the East Bay:** (510) 451-2846

A comprehensive list of legal providers in California can be found here:

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/benefits-services/more-services/immigration-services/immigration-services-contractors/public-charge-contact-list>.

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About Supervisor Wilma Chan

Alameda County Supervisor Chan represents District 3, which includes the cities of Alameda, San Leandro, parts of Oakland including Chinatown, Jack London, Fruitvale and San Antonio neighborhoods, and the unincorporated communities of San Lorenzo, Hayward Acres, and a portion of Ashland. She is currently Chair of the Health Committee and ALL IN Steering Committee, and a member of the County's Personnel, Administration, Legislation (PAL) Committee, the Budget Workgroup, the Unincorporated Services Committee, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Immigrant and Refugee Rights. For more on Supervisor Chan's accomplishments and current initiatives, please visit www.acgov.gov/board/district3 or connect on Facebook with "Supervisor Wilma Chan."