

Don't Gut Access to Health Care for Immigrants, Urge Advocates in Brief to Court

A threat to the Biden administration's "public charge" policy is a threat to our nation's public health, say leading cancer organizations.

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Corpus Christi, TX – A coalition of the country's leading public health advocacy organizations filed a friend-of-the-court [brief](#) in *Texas v. Mayorkas* in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas to urge the court to uphold the Biden administration's 2022 "public charge" policy. Amici include American Cancer Society; American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN); American Lung Association; CancerCare; Epilepsy Foundation; Hemophilia Federation of America; Leukemia & Lymphoma Society; Muscular Dystrophy Association; National Multiple Sclerosis Society; National Patient Advocate Foundation; and Susan G. Komen.

The policy, which details how the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interprets the "public charge" ground of inadmissibility, helps ensure that immigrants can access health care and other supplemental government services to which they are entitled by law, without causing harmful immigration consequences. The coalition also asks the Court to consider the potential ramifications for our nation's public health before taking action that might disrupt Medicaid access for populations that already face significant barriers accessing health care services. The coalition is represented by Democracy Forward Foundation.

In the brief, the coalition provides the court with evidence and information regarding enrollment in Medicaid and the correlation between access and the use of preventive health services. Increased enrollment in Medicaid leads to increased use of preventive health services, which in turn lowers health care costs and improves patient outcomes. Further, the brief details how eliminating barriers to Medicaid enrollment—as the Biden administration's "public charge" policy does—reduces socioeconomic inequities and promotes financial stability, including for immigrant communities where many are not offered health care coverage through their employer.

Without this critical policy, immigrant communities will lack access to immunization against communicable disease; treatable conditions will go undetected; and illnesses will be allowed to progress without medical attention and treatment.

“Cancer touches everyone. Ensuring everyone has a fair and just opportunity to prevent, detect, treat and survive cancer, regardless of their immigration status, is critical to continuing our nation’s progress in the fight against cancer,” said Lisa Lacasse, President of ACS CAN.

“The American Lung Association is dedicated to protecting lung health and access to healthcare for everyone in the U.S. This critical ‘public charge’ policy ensures that eligible individuals can access Medicaid without fear, which is important for the 34 million people living with chronic lung disease and 4 million children with asthma,” said Harold Wimmer, President and CEO of the American Lung Association. “To improve lung health and the overall health of people in the U.S., it is crucial for everyone to have access to preventive services like vaccinations, routine medical visits and lifesaving medications. We urge the court to uphold this ‘public charge’ policy.”

Expressing the importance of joining this amicus brief, Kim Czubaruk, JD, Associate Vice President of Policy at CancerCare explained, “Ensuring all people eligible for Medicaid, including non-citizens, have access to life-saving cancer screenings and treatment is critical to improving the health of individuals and families which, in turn, strengthens and benefits all of our communities.”

“Attacks on the Biden administration’s ‘public charge’ policy would sow significant confusion and fear among immigrant communities, further decreasing Medicaid enrollment, creating barriers to health care access, and contributing to adverse patient outcomes,” said Skye Perryman, President & CEO, Democracy Forward. “Everyone should have access to health care services, regardless of where they live, how much money they have, or their immigration status—no one should be deterred from accessing the care they need.”

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