

The New York Times

A Wealth Test for U.S. Citizenship

Elizabeth Arend

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To the Editor:

Re “Policy Lets U.S. Reject the Poor for Green Cards” (front page, Aug. 13):

Kenneth T. Cuccinelli II, the acting director of Citizenship and Immigration Services, claims that the administration’s new “public charge rule” reinforces the ideals of self-sufficiency by ensuring that those seeking lawful permanent status “can stand on their own two feet.”

This justification might seem rational if legal immigrants consumed the vast majority of public benefits, but they do not. The libertarian Cato Institute reported in 2018 that “immigrants are less likely to consume welfare benefits and, when they do, they generally consume a lower dollar value of benefits than native-born Americans.”

In a nation in which immigrants constitute 17 percent of the work force, have a lower unemployment rate than native-born citizens and contribute billions to the economy every year, the new rule must be seen for what it really is: a racist assault on the country’s most vulnerable residents — low-income immigrant families — that is meant to instill fear and undermine their access to the most basic health and social services.

For the sake of the economy, this is poor policy. For the sake of humanity, it’s just cruel.

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