



Trump may block immigrants who used public assistance from getting citizenship

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It may soon be harder for immigrants who have used public assistance programs to become legal permanent residents or citizens.

The White House recently sent a proposal to the Office of Management and Budget for review that would allow the Department of Homeland Security to deny an immigrant a green card or citizenship because they have used welfare programs, **NBC News reported**, citing four sources. The proposal is part of a larger Trump administration initiative to curb legal immigration to the U.S. by **cracking down on “chain migration”** and limiting the number of refugees and **asylum seekers admitted**.

The proposal, **first reported by Reuters in February**, singles out immigrants who have used services that provide food, healthcare, transportation and housing vouchers, and pre-school for the poor. Among the programs listed are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Obamacare, according to Reuters. A **draft of the rule** was published by the Washington Post in March.

Immigration rules have **long allowed the government** to weigh the likelihood the an immigrant will become totally dependent on government assistance — called a “public charge” — when determining whether to grant their immigration application. The current guideline allows the government to consider whether someone is institutionalized long-term using Medicaid, or receiving income assistance, but it bars against consideration of subsidized child care and transportation, and cash assistance in crisis situations.

This proposal would redefine “public charge” to include immigrants who depend, even slightly, on government assistance programs, as many working-class people do.

A **May 2018 analysis by the Cato Institute** found that poor immigrants are less likely than native born citizens to use every welfare program, except for Medicaid, which they are slightly more likely to use. Altogether, immigrants use 27 percent fewer benefits compared to native people with similar incomes and ages, the study found. Legal permanent residents must wait five

years before they are eligible for most public benefits. The rule will likely only consider benefits used on or after the date that the rule is finalized, **according to earlier drafts**.

The proposal is thought to be the brainchild of White House aide Stephen Miller, who has **long been advocating** for cuts to legal immigration, along with groups like the Center for Immigration Studies. Mark Krikorian, the organization's director, thinks this proposal is long overdue.

“Why are there any immigrants allowed into the U.S. who can't earn enough to support their families?” Krikorian said. “You should not be getting a green card if you used government benefits. It's about your fitness to live in the U.S. Are you going to benefit the Americans who are already here?”

Cristina Jimenez, director of United We Dream, an immigrant youth organization, tweeted that the organization will continue to mobilize immigrants to apply for legal status and to vote.