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RIN 1125-AA84: Inadmissibility and Deportability on Public Charge Grounds Testimony in opposition

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This proposed rule has had a chilling effect on access to Medicaid coverage for immigrant patients.

- In the past, restrictions on some immigrants and their eligibility for certain public benefits caused many immigrants to disenroll from benefit programs even though they were not directly targeted by changes in the law or regulation.
- While eligibility for programs does not change, the threat of deportation will cause people to refuse Medicaid and other public programs.
- The effects of such large-scale disenrollment in Medicaid would be seen broadly across the community, including citizens who are part of families with mixed immigration status.

This proposed rule threatens the health and well-being of our patients and their families, and our community at large.

- If immigrant individuals and their family members forgo Medicaid coverage as a result of the rule due to concerns or confusion about the immigration consequences of program participation, their health would be adversely affected.
- Using deportation as a threat against someone who needs care, and is legally entitled to receive it – for cancer, diabetes, or other treatments - is a perverse response to a basic human dignity, and will result in disruptions to primary care and will reduce the use of preventative services, like immunizations and screenings for infectious disease and chronic conditions.
- The young children affected by a rule like this would typically be *citizen* children — who may lose access to benefits that would lead to better long-term outcomes, including better health, greater educational attainment, and brighter future earnings prospects. In addition to the loss of services, these children would lose their parent.

This proposed rule threatens the financial stability of Hennepin Healthcare System.

- With lower coverage rates, states will lose Medicaid funding that they rely on, and hospitals like Hennepin Healthcare System will experience a significant loss in their Medicaid reimbursement followed by an increase in uncompensated care and the use of the emergency department for patients who refuse Medicaid coverage because of fear of deportation.
- This size of these estimated funding losses are unsustainable for Hennepin Healthcare System to bear alone, placing the institution, Hennepin County, and the state of Minnesota at risk of losing a critical safety net hospital and system.

- The intent of this proposal is to dissuade a small number of immigrants from accessing care they are legally entitled to, however, the IMPACT is much more severe and will affect the lives of millions more.
- We request today that you do not allow this proposal from the DOJ on deportation and the public charge to move forward.

Kaiser study

- A recent study (May – July 2019) from the Kaiser Family Foundation found evidence that nearly half of community health centers report a decline in immigrant patients in enrollment for Medicaid. Nearly 1/3 of these patients dropped or did not renew their Medicaid coverage.
- Such data should give us pause, not only for the immediate effects that lack of health coverage has on these families. We should consider the downstream costs to our health care system, our economy, and our overall well-being as a nation.
- Children who do not have ready access to health care are the same children who are in our schools. Their parents are the same parents who provide vital services to our communities. It is difficult for a society to thrive when a significant portion of people are behind. The downstream effects are more expensive visits to the Emergency Departments, more missed days from school, more absenteeism from work, and increased costs to us all.
- This Kaiser data should concern us all.

Summary

- We see those effects at Hennepin Healthcare. The patient in front of me, who through no fault of their own, has a medical condition is not the person on whom to solve our nation's immigration issues. That person in front of me in my Minneapolis hospital has a family, including children, who are important to our community and who are deserving of our best efforts. These are legal immigrants and their children are often citizen children. Our country should not allow our citizen children to suffer because their parent got sick. We can be better than this.