Potential Effects of Public Charge Changes on Health Coverage for Citizen Children

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Key Findings

The Trump Administration is pursuing changes that, for the first time, would allow the federal government to take into account use of Medicaid, CHIP, subsidies for Marketplace coverage and other health, nutrition, and non-cash programs when making public charge determinations. These changes would likely lead to decreased participation in Medicaid, CHIP, Marketplace coverage, and other programs among legal immigrants and their citizen children, even though they would remain eligible. This brief provides an overview of citizen children with a noncitizen parent potentially affected by the changes and analyzes three Medicaid/CHIP disenrollment scenarios to illustrate how the changes could potentially affect their health coverage and uninsured rate.

In 2016, there were 10.4 million citizen children with at least one noncitizen parent. Nearly nine in ten of these children live in a family with a full-time worker, but these workers often are in low-wage jobs, leading to lower family incomes and more limited access to health coverage. As such, over half (56%), or 5.8 million, citizen children with a noncitizen parent had Medicaid or CHIP coverage in 2016. (See Appendix tables for state data.)

We illustrate the potential impact of different Medicaid/CHIP disenrollment rates and show that, if the policy leads to disenrollment rates from 15% to 35%, an estimated 875,000 to 2 million citizen children with a noncitizen parent could drop Medicaid/CHIP coverage despite remaining eligible. The majority disenrolling would become uninsured, increasing their uninsured rate from 8% to between 14% and 22% and the uninsured rate for all children from 5% to between 6% and 7%. Although it is difficult to predict the effect of the policy change, these disenrollment rates illustrate the potential impact and draw on previous research on the chilling effect welfare reform had on enrollment of immigrant families. However, unlike the current draft policy, welfare reform did not affect immigration status. Thus, this illustrative analysis may underestimate the policy's impact on Medicaid/CHIP participation. In addition, this analysis does not account for coverage losses that would result from decreased participation in Marketplace coverage.

Coverage losses would negatively affect the health of children and their families' financial stability. Coverage losses would reduce access to care, contributing to worse health outcomes. Moreover, reduced participation in nutrition and other support programs that are also proposed to be considered as part of public charge determinations would likely compound these effects.

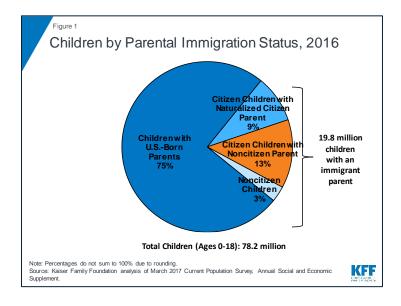


Introduction

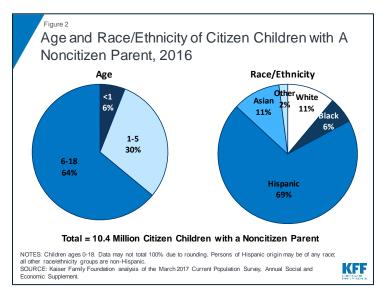
The Trump Administration is pursuing changes that, for the first time, would allow the federal government to take into account use of health, nutrition, and other non-cash programs when making public charge determinations. Under these changes, use of these programs, including Medicaid, CHIP, and subsidies for Marketplace coverage, by an individual or family member, including a citizen child, could result in the federal government denying an individual a "green card" or adjustment to lawful permanent status or entry into the U.S. These changes would likely result in reduced participation in Medicaid, CHIP, Marketplace coverage, and other programs by immigrant families, including citizen children, even though they would remain eligible. Decreases in Medicaid and CHIP enrollment would increase the number of uninsured and reduce access to care, increase financial strains on families, and widen disparities in coverage. This brief provides an overview of citizen children with a noncitizen parent who could potentially be affected by the proposed changes and presents three Medicaid/CHIP disenrollment scenarios to illustrate how the changes could potentially affect their health coverage and uninsured rate. It is based on Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of Current Population Survey Data. (See Methods for more details.) Appendix Tables 2 and 3 provide state-specific data.

Overview of Citizen Children with a Noncitizen Parent

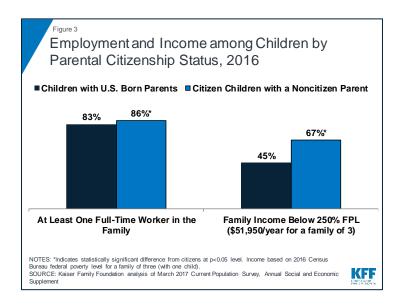
In 2016, nearly 20 million, or one in four, children had at least one immigrant parent, and nearly nine in ten (88%) of these children were citizens (Figure 1). Over half, or 10.4 million, of these children lived in mixed status families, where the child is a citizen and at least one parent is a noncitizen. Citizen children with a noncitizen parent are heavily concentrated in a few states. Over half of children with a noncitizen parent live in California (25%), Texas (16%), New York (7%), and Florida (6%) (Appendix Table 2).



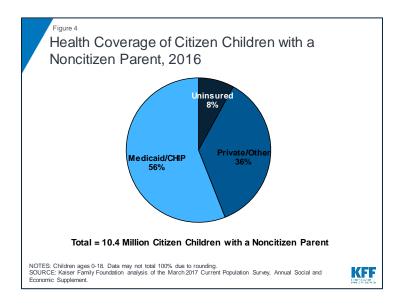
Citizen children with a noncitizen parent range in age and race/ethnicity, although the majority are between ages 6-18 and Hispanic (Figure 2). About one in three (36%) citizen children with a noncitizen parent are below age six; the remaining 64% are between ages 6-18. Over two-thirds (69%) of citizen children with a noncitizen parent are Hispanic and 11% are Asian. The remaining 19% includes 11% who are White non-Hispanic, 6% who are Black non-Hispanic, and 2% who are another or mixed race.



Although citizen children with a noncitizen parent are more likely to live in a family with a full-time worker compared to those with U.S. born parents, they have lower family incomes. Nearly nine in ten (86%) citizen children with a noncitizen parent live in a family with at least one full-time worker (Figure 3). However, over two-thirds (67%) of citizen children with a noncitizen parent have family incomes below 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL), compared to 45% of children with U.S. born parents. This finding reflects that noncitizens are often employed in low-wage jobs and industries.



Reflecting their lower family incomes, Medicaid and CHIP play a key role in covering citizen children with a noncitizen parent, but they remain more likely than those with U.S. born parents to be uninsured. Given that over two-thirds of citizen children with a noncitizen parent have family incomes below 250% FPL, many are within the income eligibility limits for Medicaid or CHIP.¹ As such, Medicaid and CHIP cover over half (56%), or 5.8 million, citizen children with a noncitizen parent. This coverage helps to fill gaps in private coverage since many noncitizen parents work in low-wage jobs that often do not offer health coverage. However, citizen children with a noncitizen parent remain more likely than children with U.S. born parents to be uninsured (8% vs. 5%). Moreover, their parents are more than three times as likely to be uninsured themselves compared to U.S. born parents (24% vs. 7%).



Potential Coverage Losses Due to Public Charge Policies

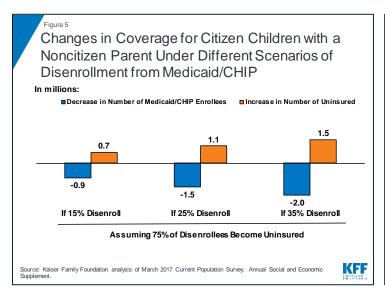
Under draft changes proposed by the Trump Administration, use of health, nutrition, and other non-cash programs by an individual or a family member, including a citizen child, could result in the federal government denying an individual adjustment to lawful permanent resident status (i.e., a "green card") or entry into the United States.² Under longstanding policy, individuals who are determined to be a "public charge" can be denied lawful permanent residence or entry into the U.S. Today, individuals may be determined a public charge if they rely on or are likely to rely on public cash assistance or government funded long-term institutional care. Current policy does not allow the federal government to consider the use of non-cash benefits, such as health and nutrition programs, in public charge determinations. Under the draft proposed changes, the federal government could consider previously excluded health, nutrition, and other non-cash programs in public charge determinations. These programs would include Medicaid, CHIP, and subsidies for Marketplace coverage. In addition, the changes would newly allow the federal government to take into account use of programs by citizen children and other family members in making a public charge determination.

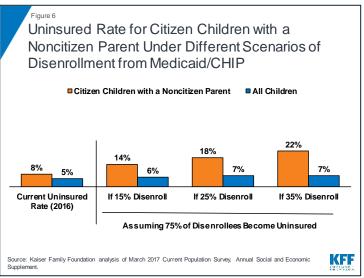
The changes in public charge policy would likely lead to decreased participation in Medicaid, CHIP, Marketplace coverage, and other programs among legal immigrant families, including their citizen children, even though they would remain eligible. Fears of negative consequences on immigration status are a barrier to Medicaid and CHIP enrollment for eligible immigrant families today even though the federal government cannot consider use of Medicaid and CHIP in public charge determinations under current policy.³ The proposed changes would amplify these fears because use of Medicaid, CHIP, as well as subsidies for Marketplace coverage and other programs could negatively affect immigration status. The preamble to the draft proposed rule notes, "the action provides a strong disincentive for the receipt or use of public benefits by aliens, as well as their household members, including U.S. children." It is expected that the public charge policy change would primarily affect individuals seeking a green card through a family-based petition. However, increased fears would likely extend beyond individuals directly affected by the policy to the broader immigrant community.⁴ Due to increased fears, it is likely that fewer eligible individuals would enroll themselves and their children in health coverage and individuals currently enrolled in programs would disenroll themselves and their children despite remaining eligible for coverage.

To illustrate potential effects of these changes on health coverage of children, we present three scenarios of disenrollment from Medicaid and CHIP among citizen children with a noncitizen parent. As of 2016, 5.8 million citizen children with a noncitizen parent were enrolled in Medicaid or CHIP (see Appendix 2 for state data), and 790,000 or 8% were uninsured. We applied disenrollment rates from Medicaid and CHIP of 15%, 25%, and 35%. Although it is difficult to predict the effect of the policy change, these disenrollment rates illustrate the potential impact and draw on previous research on the chilling effect welfare reform had on enrollment of immigrant families. However, unlike the current draft policy, welfare reform did not affect immigration status. Thus, this illustrative analysis may underestimate the impact that the policy may have on participation in Medicaid/CHIP. We assume that 75% of children disenrolling from Medicaid and CHIP would become uninsured based on data showing some access to private coverage among this population. However, some families may not be able to afford private coverage even if it is available. As such, this analysis may underestimate the share of children disenrolling from Medicaid/CHIP who would become uninsured. In addition, this analysis does not account for decreased coverage due to fewer individuals enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid or CHIP or coverage losses that would result from decreased participation in Marketplace coverage.

If the public charge policy change leads to Medicaid/CHIP disenrollment rates ranging from 15% to 35%, an estimated 875,000 to 2 million citizen children with a noncitizen parent could drop Medicaid/CHIP coverage despite remaining eligible, and their uninsured rate would rise from 8% to between 14% and 22%. Specifically, as shown in Figures 5 and 6 and Appendix Table 1:

- A 15% decline in Medicaid/CHIP enrollment among citizen children with a noncitizen parent would result in 875,000 children losing Medicaid/CHIP coverage and 657,000 becoming uninsured. These losses would increase the uninsured rate for citizen children with a noncitizen parent from 8% to 14%, and the uninsured rate for all children would increase from 5% to 6%.
- A 25% decline in Medicaid/CHIP enrollment among citizen children with a noncitizen parent
 would result in 1.5 million children losing Medicaid/CHIP coverage and 1.1 million becoming
 uninsured. These losses would increase the uninsured rate for citizen children with a noncitizen
 parent from 8% to 18%, and the uninsured rate for all children would increase from 5% to 7%.
- A 35% decline in Medicaid/CHIP enrollment among citizen children with a noncitizen parent would result in 2.0 million children losing Medicaid/CHIP coverage and 1.5 million becoming uninsured. These losses would increase the uninsured rate for citizen children with a noncitizen parent from 8% to 22%, and the uninsured rate for all children would increase from 5% to 7%.





Coverage losses would negatively affect the health of children and their families' financial stability. Coverage losses would reduce access to care, contributing to worse health outcomes. Reduced participation in nutrition and other programs that are also proposed to be considered in public charge determinations would likely compound these effects. In particular, the Earned Income Tax Credit, free or reduced price lunch program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Women Infant and Children's Program (WIC) provide important sources of support for these households (Appendix 3). Decreased participation in these programs would negatively affect the financial stability of families and the growth and healthy development of their children.

Methods

Findings in this brief are based on Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of the March 2017 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Children include individuals ages 0-18. For the analysis, children are grouped into mutually exclusive categories, including: children with U.S. born parents, citizen children in a household where at least one parent is a naturalized citizen, citizen children in a household where at least one parent is a noncitizen, and noncitizen children.

For estimates of potential changes in coverage due to public charge policies, we present several scenarios using different disenrollment rates for Medicaid and CHIP. These disenrollment scenarios are illustrative of the potential impact of the public charge policy change and draw on previous research on the chilling effect welfare reform had on enrollment of immigrant families. Specifically, Kaushal and Kaestner found 25% disenrollment among children of foreign-born parents. This study was most relevant to our analysis given its focus on children and its inclusion of children who remained eligible after the welfare reform changes. Using this 25% disenrollment rate as a midpoint, we also examined the impact if the disenrollment rate was lower at 15% or higher at 35% to illustrate the impact of alternate disenrollment rates given uncertainty about the actual impact if the policy is implemented. Because, unlike the current draft proposed policy, welfare reform did not affect immigration status, this illustrative analysis may underestimate the impact the policy may have on participation in Medicaid/CHIP.

The estimates also assume that 75% of those disenrolling from Medicaid and CHIP would become uninsured. This assumption is based on Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of Current Population Survey data showing some access to private coverage among this population. However, this analysis may underestimate the share of children disenrolling from Medicaid/CHIP who would become uninsured since some families may not be able to afford private coverage even if it is available. Further, this analysis does not account for decreased coverage due to fewer individuals enrolling their eligible children in Medicaid or CHIP or coverage losses that would result from decreased participation in Marketplace coverage.

¹ Neeraj Kaushal and Robert Kaestner, "Welfare Reform and Health Insurance of Immigrants," *Health Services Research*,40(3), (June 2005), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361164/

This brief was prepared by Samantha Artiga and Rachel Garfield, with the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Anthony Damico, an independent consultant to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Appendix Table 1: Projected Changes in Children's Coverage Based Assumed Disenrollment of Citizen Children with a Noncitizen Parent from Medicaid/CHIP (in Millions)								
	Current Coverage (as of 2016)	15% Disenrollment Rate	25% Disenrollment Rate	35% Disenrollment Rate				
Number Disenrolled from Medicaid/CHIP		0.9	1.5	2.0				
Increase in Uninsured (if 75% of disenrollees become uninsured)		0.7	1.1	1.5				
Citizen Children with a Noncitizen Parent								
Medicaid/CHIP	5.8	5.0	4.4	3.8				
Uninsured	0.8	1.4	1.9	2.3				
Uninsured Rate	8%	14%	18%	22%				
Total Children								
Medicaid/CHIP	29.8	28.9	28.4	27.8				
Uninsured	4.2	4.9	5.3	5.7				
Uninsured Rate	5%	6%	7%	7%				
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of March 2017 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.								

Appendix Table 2	Medicaid/CHIP Coverage for Citizen Children With a Noncitizen Parent, 2016						
	All Children	Citizen Children with a Noncitizen Parent					
	All Cillidiell	Total	Income <250% FPL	Medicaid/CHIP Coverage			
United States	78,150,000	10,398,000	6,985,000	5,836,000			
Alabama	1,155,000	59,000	44,000	34,000			
Alaska	202,000	11,000	NA	NA			
Arizona	1,715,000	312,000	264,000	168,000			
Arkansas	742,000	38,000	26,000	20,000			
California	9,678,000	2,559,000	1,815,000	1,567,000			
Colorado	1,318,000	136,000	NA	84,000			
Connecticut	804,000	83,000	42,000	45,000			
Delaware	215,000	25,000	15,000	12,000			
DC	128,000	12,000	6,000	5,000			
Florida	4,450,000	638,000	416,000	308,000			
Georgia	2,666,000	315,000	238,000	204,000			
Hawaii	319,000	37,000	23,000	17,000			
Idaho	473,000	49,000	42,000	NA			
Illinois	3,048,000	442,000	251,000	224,000			
Indiana	1,694,000	NA	NA	NA			
Iowa	756,000	46,000	39,000	29,000			
Kansas	763,000	65,000	50,000	NA			
Kentucky	1,104,000	NA	NA	NA			
Louisiana	1,176,000	36,000	NA	NA			
Maine	272,000	NA	NA	NA			
Maryland	1,428,000	190,000	113,000	91,000			
Massachusetts	1,480,000	208,000	105,000	102,000			
Michigan	2,280,000	118,000	46,000	55,000			
Minnesota	1,383,000	131,000	NA	NA			
Mississippi	768,000	19,000	NA	NA			
Missouri	1,479,000	63,000	NA	NA			
Montana	241,000	6,000	NA	NA			
Nebraska	500,000	56,000	39,000	26,000			
Nevada	729,000	140,000	94,000	61,000			
New Hampshire	283,000	NA	NA	NA			
New Jersey	2,077,000	362,000	194,000	150,000			
New Mexico	522,000	65,000	53,000	46,000			
New York	4,397,000	678,000	406,000	392,000			
North Carolina	2,450,000	300,000	221,000	197,000			
North Dakota	188,000	NA	NA	NA			
Ohio	2,792,000	126,000	81,000	70,000			
Oklahoma	1,023,000	121,000	97,000	90,000			
Oregon	933,000	162,000	127,000	110,000			
Pennsylvania	2,836,000	165,000	86,000	97,000			
Rhode Island	217,000	25,000	NA	NA			
South Carolina	1,183,000	76,000	44,000	NA			
South Dakota	229,000	NA	NA	NA NA			
Tennessee	1,550,000	104,000	82,000	58,000			
Texas	7,731,000	1,644,000	1,170,000	966,000			
Utah	963,000	76,000	56,000	NA			
Vermont	131,000	NA	NA	NA NA			
Virginia	2,013,000	243,000	151,000	93,000			
Washington	1,721,000	262,000	164,000	157,000			
West Virginia	398,000	NA	NA	NA			
Wisconsin	1,396,000	NA	NA NA	NA NA			
Wyoming	153,000	6,000	4,000	NA NA			
,	100,000	0,000		i iv			

NA: Estimate not reported; Relative Standard Error is greater than 30%. FPL is Federal Poverty Level.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of March 2017 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Earned Income Tax	Free or Reduced Price	Supplemental Nutrition	Women, Infant, and
Credit	Lunch	Assistance Program	Children's Service
5,849,000	5,267,000	2,644,000	1,932,000
38,000	29,000	NA	N/
NA	NA	NA	N/
241,000	195,000	123,000	88,000
20,000	22,000	NA	N/
1,554,000	1,507,000	715,000	573,000
		NA	N.A
		NA	N.A
		NA	N.A
			N.A
			102,000
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			N/
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			41,000
			N/
			NA
			N/
			N/
			N/
			13,000
			73,000
	200,000	88,000	103,000
5,000	NA	NA	5,000
61,000		60,000	NA.
78,000	55,000	45,000	54,000
102,000	107,000	61,000	N/
63,000	63,000	54,000	N/
14,000	15,000	12,000	N/
37,000	37,000	NA	N/
	5,000	NA	N.A
			NA
			289,000
			N/
			N/
			38,000
			78,000
			NA NA
33,000 NA	27,000 NA	NA NA	NA NA
	Credit 5,849,000 38,000 NA 241,000 20,000 1,554,000 64,000 33,000 13,000 6,000 321,000 201,000 18,000 38,000 194,000 46,000 25,000 50,000 20,000 19,000 NA 103,000 82,000 44,000 76,000 10,000 33,000 NA 171,000 42,000 352,000 171,000 42,000 352,000 171,000 5,000 61,000 78,000 102,000 63,000 14,000 37,000 62,000 987,000 42,000 NA 11	Credit Lunch 5,849,000 5,267,000 38,000 29,000 NA NA 241,000 195,000 20,000 22,000 1,554,000 1,507,000 64,000 47,000 33,000 39,000 13,000 11,000 6,000 4,000 321,000 279,000 201,000 162,000 18,000 162,000 18,000 162,000 194,000 181,000 46,000 NA 25,000 24,000 50,000 47,000 20,000 23,000 19,000 18,000 NA NA 103,000 89,000 82,000 71,000 44,000 NA 76,000 76,000 NA NA 33,000 36,000 87,000 77,000 NA NA 171,000 127,000<	Credit Lunch Assistance Program 5,849,000 5,267,000 2,644,000 38,000 29,000 NA NA NA NA 241,000 195,000 123,000 20,000 22,000 NA 1,554,000 1,507,000 715,000 64,000 47,000 NA 33,000 39,000 NA 13,000 11,000 NA 6,000 4,000 NA 321,000 279,000 159,000 201,000 162,000 NA 18,000 16,000 NA 18,000 181,000 94,000 194,000 181,000 94,000 46,000 NA NA 25,000 24,000 NA 19,000 18,000 NA 19,000 18,000 NA 19,000 18,000 NA NA NA NA 19,000 18,000 NA

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of March 2017 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

ENDNOTES

¹ The median Medicaid/CHIP eligibility level for children across states is 255% FPL as of January 2018. Tricia Brooks, Karina Wagnerman, Samantha Artiga and Elizabeth Cornachione, Medicaid and CHIP Eligibility, Enrollment, Renewal, and Cost Sharing Policies as of January 2018: Findings from a 50-State Survey, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, March 2018), https://www.kff.org/medicaid/report/medicaid-and-chip-eligibility-enrollment-renewal-and-cost-sharing-policies-as-of-january-2018-findings-from-a-50-state-survey/.

- ³ Oscar C. Gomez, Liberty Day, and Samantha Artiga, Connecting Eligible Immigrant Families to Health Coverage and Care: Key Lessons from Outreach and Enrollment Workers, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, October 2011), https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/connecting-eligible-immigrant-families-to-health-coverage/ and Samantha Artiga and Petry Ubri, Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2017), https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/living-in-an-immigrant-family-in-america-how-fear-and-toxic-stress-are-affecting-daily-life-well-being-health/.
- ⁴ Findings show that recent immigration policy changes have increased fears and confusion among broad groups of immigrants beyond those directly affected by the changes. See Samantha Artiga and Petry Ubri, Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, December 2017), https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/living-in-an-immigrant-family-in-america-how-fear-and-toxic-stress-are-affecting-daily-life-well-being-health/. Similarly, earlier experiences show that welfare reform changes increased confusion and fear about enrolling in public benefits among immigrant families beyond those directly affected by the changes. See. Neeraj Kaushal and Robert Kaestner, "Welfare Reform and Health Insurance of Immigrants," *Health Services Research*,40(3), (June 2005), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361164/;
- ⁵ Neeraj Kaushal and Robert Kaestner, "Welfare Reform and Health Insurance of Immigrants," *Health Services Research*,40(3), (June 2005), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361164/; Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel, *Trends in Noncitizens' and Citizens' Use of Public Benefits Following Welfare Reform* 1994-97 (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 1, 1999) https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/69781/408086-Trends-in-Noncitizens-and-Citizens-Use-of-Public-Benefits-Following-Welfare-Reform.pdf; Namratha R. Kandula, et. al, "The Unintended Impact of Welfare Reform on the Medicaid Enrollment of Eligible Immigrants, *Health Services Research*, 39(5), (October 2004), https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361081/; Rachel Benson Gold, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/P

² Similar criteria would also be applied to people seeking to extend or change their temporary nonimmigrant status in the U.S.

⁶ Kaiser Family Foundation analysis of March 2017 Current Population Survey data.

⁷ Julia Paradise, Data Note: Three Findings about Access to Care and Health Outcomes in Medicaid, (Washington, DC: Kaiser Family Foundation, March 23, 2017), https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/data-note-three-findings-about-access-to-care-and-health-outcomes-in-medicaid/

⁸ SNAP Helps Millions of Children, (Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 2017), https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-helps-millions-of-children, "About WIC-How WIC Helps," United States Department of Agriculture, Women, Infants and Children (WIC), https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/about-wic-how-wic-helps, accessed May 10, 2018; and Chuck Marr, et al, EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development Research Finds, (Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 2015), https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/eitc-and-child-tax-credit-promote-work-reduce-poverty-and-support-childrens.