

Public Comment FAQ:

Your voice matters! This comment period is the best – and only – period for the public to weigh in and fight back.

On October 10, the Trump Administration proposed sweeping regulations that would the well-being and health of millions of families at risk. If the ‘public charge’ rule is finalized in its proposed form, this would mark a significant and harmful departure from long-standing immigration policy. The proposal would make – and has already made – immigrant families afraid to seek programs that support their basic needs. These programs help families stay strong and productive, and raise children who thrive. With nearly 1 in 4 children having at least one immigrant parent, this issue touches millions of people in our country – it’s critical now and for our nation’s future.

The public has until December 10, 2018 to tell the government why this rule is a bad idea by submitting comments in an official “notice and comment” period. Our opposition needs to be strong because the stakes are high. If we want our communities to thrive, everyone in those communities must be able to stay together and get the care, services and supports we all need to remain healthy and productive. We must tell President Trump we will not stand by while his administration attempts to punish families for putting food on their tables.

What is a “notice and comment” period?

A ‘notice and comment’ period gives anyone from the general public an opportunity to weigh in on a regulation that a federal agency is considering. Federal law requires the government read and consider every *unique* comment before issuing a final rule. This ‘notice and comment’ period is also important because it can later provide an opportunity to challenge the regulations in court if a concern with the regulation was raised and not addressed. These comments can help slow the process down and shape the Administration’s decisions.

Why do comments matter?

- Raise the profile of this issue to policymakers and the public to show this issue is important to hundreds of thousands of people across different sectors
- Make the Trump Administration justify its actions
- Delay the rulemaking process, which gives advocates more time to fight – and for political winds to shift
- Provide an opportunity to challenge the regulation in court if a concern with the regulation is raised and not addressed
- Gives people who are affected by the rule a chance to raise their voice and tell their story to policymakers

Who should submit comments?

Anyone! Anyone can submit comments: affected families, concerned community members, organization staff and board members, members of faith communities - even public officials can submit comments!

The public plays an extremely important role by commenting on proposed rules that solicit public input. We encourage you not only to submit comment yourself, but also to ask your friends, family members and co-workers to do the same.

Can I sign onto comments that someone else has drafted?

Federal agencies have to count how many *unique* comments they receive. If five people each submit their own comments, that is five comments. (If five people sign onto one letter, that counts as only one comment.) It's fine to start with a sample comment BUT you should modify it to reflect your own thoughts and experiences so that it counts as a *unique* comment. You're welcome to use text from templates, but we **strongly urge** you to include at least a few sentences that are unique to you and your perspective.

Is commenting considered lobbying?

No. A public comment period is open to the entire public – it is anyone's right to weigh in, and is different from asking a lawmaker to vote yes or no on a specific bill.

Do public comments really matter?

Yes! For example, when the National Park Service proposed to increase park fees last year, initially it would have doubled or tripled fees at some parks. Many groups were outraged, saying it would severely limit access to parks for many people. After receiving more than 100,000 comments, the Park Service settled on a more modest fee increase. It **does** make a difference!

What information do I have to provide?

For the public charge comment period, Dept. of Homeland Security requires that commenters provide their **first and last name**. Additional info is entirely optional.

The official "notice of public rulemaking" requests that all comments be submitted in English. If someone has comments in another language, they can be submitted together in the original language and translated to English (if translated, include a statement with the translator's name and a note from the translator that verifies the accuracy of the translation).

Can comments be submitted anonymously?

If a person doesn't want to disclose their name or contact information, we recommend a friend or representative submit a comment on their behalf, rather than submitting a comment anonymously.

Our public comment website requires an email address – it's perfectly fine to submit multiple comments on behalf of different people using the same email address. We know this will likely

be common for organizations that work with people who don't want to be identifiable or who don't have access to a computer.

A health worker, a food bank volunteer, an attorney, a counselor can submit comments on behalf of multiple clients – and should acknowledge their relationship to that person in the comment to provide legitimacy and context. For example: *“I am a WIC staffer in Pasco, WA, and I am writing on behalf of one of my clients who does not wish to disclose her contact information. Ms. T is a 32 year old mother of 2 U.S. citizen children who are enrolled in SNAP and Medicaid. Ms. T said her child’s asthma would not be controllable without Medicaid – this health coverage has likely saved her life at least once, and avoided multiple hospitalizations. These programs have kept my family healthy.”*

**The administration is required by law to review public comments on the proposed regulation. Now is the time to make your voice heard. Please submit a comment to help stop this attack on families, communities, and children.
It’s up to all of us!**