

House resolution urging that for the duration of the pandemic emergency, the federal government refrain from arresting or detaining individuals based on their immigration status in any healthcare settings and suspend implementation of the *Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds Rule*

Offered by: Committee on Health Care

Whereas, the nation is now encountering the effects of a health pandemic of historic dimensions caused by the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and

Whereas, it is of critical importance that health care providers intercept the COVID-19 virus at the earliest opportunity, in order to protect public health, and

Whereas, in these extraordinary circumstances, no person, including any undocumented person, who may have contracted COVID-19 should feel apprehensive about seeking immediate screening or medical attention due to the individual's immigration status, and

Whereas, on February 24, 2020, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security began implementation of the *Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds Rule* (Public Charge Rule), 84 Fed. Reg. 41,292 (Aug. 14, 2019), which seeks to deny certain categories of immigration status to individuals whom the Department perceives may require public financial support, and

Whereas, this recently implemented rule could instill in the minds of many legal immigrants the fear that they might be deported from the United States if they were to interact with public officials, and

Whereas, these fears of immigrants extend to visiting a health care facility, as immigrants are afraid that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers might be present or be called and detain them, and

Whereas, failure of an individual to seek prompt screening or medical assistance could lead to increased transmission of COVID-19, further complicating and jeopardizing Vermont's response to this medical pandemic emergency, and

Whereas, there are recent precedents for the federal establishment of zones based on public health and safety, where immigration laws are not enforced, including in Flint, Michigan, during its water crisis and in some areas struck by recent major hurricanes, and

Whereas, it is imperative that the treatment of COVID-19 be as robust as possible and not be hampered on account of fear on the part of immigrants to seek immediate medical care, now therefore be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives:

That this legislative body, for the duration of the pandemic emergency, urges the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to suspend implementation of the *Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds* Rule, and be it further

Resolved: That this legislative body urges the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to issue an official statement that employees of its Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection agencies will not arrest any person based on immigration status at a hospital, healthcare facility, or coronavirus testing site for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, and be it further

Resolved: That the Clerk of the House be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the President, the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Vermont Congressional Delegation.