



Documentation Requirements Relating to Health for the Immigrant Community

The proposed approach of this bill – whereby patients are asked for their names, addresses, and phone numbers, coupled with numerous probing citizenship or immigration documentation requirements – will undoubtedly frighten immigrants, their families, and their communities. Regardless of their immigration status – undocumented or not – immigrants will fear that the extensive information to be collected could affect their immigration status.

If immigrant families are afraid to seek health care, we will all suffer the dramatic public health consequences. If the legislative proposal is finalized, fear and confusion will spread throughout immigrant communities, and many people will avoid medical treatment, leading to aggravated illness, and death. Children will go without immunizations, undermining the fight to eradicate serious childhood illnesses like rubella. We will all be put at higher risk of simple illnesses like influenza because people are afraid to seek medical treatment. This is especially noteworthy at a time when our nation is trying to protect its residents from potential biological terrorism and contaminants. It simply does not make sense to hinder a significant portion of our population from seeking health care.

Eligible citizen participants will be unfairly cut from social services programs or be faced with undue financial costs. Many families that would normally be eligible for benefits will fall from support programs because they could not produce sufficient documentation to prove their citizenship. This would disproportionately affect many communities who are less likely to have a birth certificate or passport, such as elderly African Americans and those living in rural communities. Otherwise, many households will be forced to spend limited resources on these documents; the cost can be prohibitive for many households that qualify for social services.

Collecting the required information will be a burden to social services workers who are already overextended. Social services providers are unlikely to be familiar with the complex and constantly changing immigration law principles needed to determine a patient's status and will have to undergo extensive training. Further, they will have to spend more time concentrating on administrative tasks, rather than connecting eligible participants with much needed assistance. Citizenship or immigration status cannot be easily determined through documentation and absence of a Social Security Number (SSN), *Green Card*, or identity documents does not determine the status of a patient.

The state will incur numerous financial costs through implementation of this legislation. For many states, the costs to collect citizenship or immigration documentation from every person applying for benefits far outweigh any nominal amount recouped from persons who

inappropriately access such services. The majority of states will have to implement new technology to track the data sets required to fully determine citizenship and immigration status.

When immigrant parents are afraid to visit health care providers, their citizen family members also lose access to health care. According to the Urban Institute, 85% of immigrant families include both citizens and noncitizens. If their parents are afraid to interact with health care providers, these children will be denied care.