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For immediate release

contact: Bruce Goldstein
bgoldstein@farmworkerjustice.org

Farmworker Justice Condemns DHS Final “Public Charge” Rule On Eligibility for Immigration Status

Today, the Administration released its new regulation on the issue of “public charge” for people applying for immigration status. The final rule will be published formally in the Federal Register later this week.

The new rule penalizes low-income, limited-English-proficient individuals, denying them access to immigration status.

Farmworkers, essential contributors to our economies, will find it very difficult under the final public charge rule to gain admission as immigrants to the United States and become lawful permanent residents.

Farmworkers’ low wages and lack of employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance, will be counted as negative factors in considering whether to grant them immigration status based on their supposed potential to be a “public charge.”

The agricultural industry’s low pay and lack of fringe benefits will therefore be used against farmworkers seeking immigration status, even if they have no intention of using public benefits.

“The new immigration regulation on public charge is contrary to the values of our country as a nation of immigrants who built this country,” said Bruce Goldstein, President of Farmworker Justice. He added, “We rely on farmworkers to provide us with food and keep us healthy. We should enable farmworkers and their families to be full-fledged members of our communities, our economy and our democracy.”

One of the consequences of this harsh rule, today and in the future, will be to keep undocumented farmworkers – the majority of the farm labor force – on the margins, vulnerable to abuse. Our immigration system must value the contributions of low-wage workers, including farmworkers. Goldstein added, “We will continue to fight for a fair immigration system and reversal of this anti-immigrant, anti-worker policy.”

Farmworker Justice, a national advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C., has played a leading role in immigration and labor policy regarding agricultural workers since its founding in 1981. www.farmworkerjustice.org