

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL AGENDA BILL

NO. _____ 2018-312A

CLEARANCES	Initial	Date	Date Received in Council Office	Agenda Date	Assigned to:
Originator:	PHAB	11/21/18		12/4/18	PW & Health Committee
Division Head:					
Dept. Head:	DAD				
Prosecutor:	K/S	11-21-18			
Purchasing/Budget:					
Executive:					

TITLE OF DOCUMENT:

Support for Immigrant Families

ATTACHMENTS:

*Draft Resolution: Health Protection for Immigrant Families
Draft comment letter opposing changes to the "Public Charge" Rule*

SEPA review required? () Yes (x) NO
SEPA review completed? () Yes (x) NO

Should Clerk schedule a hearing? () Yes (x) NO
Requested Date:

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE: *(If this item is an ordinance or requires a public hearing, you must provide the language for use in the required public notice. Be specific and cite RCW or WCC as appropriate. Be clear in explaining the intent of the action.)*

The Public Health Advisory Board seeks support to move forward with a proposal for a Resolution to stand in support of immigrant families in Whatcom County.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

COUNCIL ACTION:

Related County Contract #:

Related File Numbers:

Ordinance or Resolution Number:

Please Note: *Once adopted and signed, ordinances and resolutions are available for viewing and printing on the County's website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council.*

PROPOSED BY: PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

SPONSORED BY: HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DRAFT

RESOLUTION NO. _____

HEALTH PROTECTION FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Whereas: In accordance with RCW 70.05.060 it is the responsibility of the Whatcom County Health Board to supervise all matters pertaining to the preservation of the life and health of the people within its jurisdiction and;

Whereas: the Whatcom County Board of Health shall supervise the maintenance of all health and sanitary measures for the protection of the public health within its jurisdiction and;

Whereas: on October 29, 2013, the Whatcom County Health Board unanimously passed Resolution 2013-038 Call for Compassionate Community Approach to Public Health Related Services and;

Whereas: the Whatcom County Health Board has identified the health of children and families as a policy focus area for 2018 and;

Whereas: Whatcom County, just like many counties in Washington State, is the home and workplace of large immigrant communities with citizens and immigrants of all statuses; and

Whereas: Recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and detentions in Whatcom County have caused immigrant families significant trauma resulting in mental health concerns in adults and adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) for young children and;

Whereas: Fear of detention and deportation has caused families to avoid seeking needed medical and social services and;

Whereas: Changes to federal laws are being proposed that would cut off government health benefits and housing for immigrants and their families and;

Whereas: Whatcom County may face increased demands for assistance from immigrants and their families resulting from changes to the "public charge" definition because fewer individuals will be able to access federal benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Section 8 housing vouchers and healthcare services and;

Whereas: Whatcom County administers federal programs, and changes to federal laws could impose burdensome new tracking and reporting requirements for local offices that administer these programs and;

Whereas: Changes to federal law may discourage immigrants and their families from seeking federal health benefits, such as Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) resulting in health impacts to those families, decreased health status of our community and increased costs to county budgets and;

Whereas: The Health Board has resolved to seek opportunities to increase awareness and promote the concept of a “compassionate” or “trauma sensitive” approach and to integrate this paradigm into the broadest possible range of all public health, education, and human services in our county and;

Whereas: The Whatcom County Health Board seeks to stand in support of our immigrant families by upholding the principles of health equity and ensuring that the health and social service needs of citizens and immigrants of all statuses are met.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Whatcom County Health Board that:

The Health Board will contact our U.S. Senators and Representatives opposing changes to federal legislation that would reduce health, housing and other social service benefits for immigrant families and;

The Health Board will further ensure that “compassionate approaches” are built into all public health related services and contracts including human services programs and;

The Public Health Advisory Board shall convene a task force as provided for in WCC 24.01.051.A.4 to evaluate existing systems and support services for families impacted by the threat of deportation including access to health care, mental health, housing and other social services considering cultural, safety and language barriers preventing access.

APPROVED this ____ day of _____, 20__.

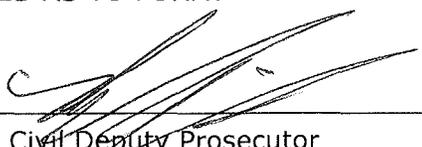
ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH BOARD
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Rud Brown, Health Board Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



(Name), Civil Deputy Prosecutor

DRAFT

Samantha Deshommès, Chief, Regulatory Coordination Division,
Office of Policy and Strategy, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20529-0012

December XX , 2018

Dear Ms Deshommès:

On behalf of the Whatcom County Health Board, I am writing to oppose and request withdrawal of the Department of Homeland Security's proposed Public Charge rule change as posted on the Federal Register on October 10, 2018 (DHS Docket No. USCIS-2010-0012). The purpose of the Whatcom County Health Board is to oversee matters related to the preservation, promotion and improvement of the public's health within Whatcom County. After review of the rule and proposed changes, the Whatcom County Health Board believes that adoption and implementation of the proposed rule would have a negative impact on the health and safety of our county, as well as our state and nation.

The proposed policy will cause immigrant families to be afraid to access vital services, such as health, nutrition and housing programs for themselves and their children for fear of jeopardizing their permanent residency status. The proposed rule includes a complicated weighting system that is likely to cause confusion and misunderstanding for both immigrants and service providers. Limited or reduced access to support programs will affect immigrant health, financial stability, and the healthy development of their children. Whatcom County may face increased demands for assistance from immigrants and their families resulting from changes to the "public charge" definition because fewer individuals will be able to access federal benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Section 8 housing vouchers, and healthcare services. Whatcom County administers federal programs, and changes to federal laws could impose burdensome new tracking and reporting requirements for local offices that administer these programs.

Under the proposed rule, the changes would likely lead to decreases in participation in Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and other programs among legal immigrant families and their primarily US-born children, beyond those directly affected by the rule changes. Decrease in health insurance coverage is likely to result in health impacts to children and families, decreased use of prevention services such as immunizations, decreased health status of our community and increased costs to county budgets.

We believe that all people, regardless of their nationality or immigration status have the right to live in a safe and healthy community that includes access to health and basic needs services.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Rud Browne
Chair, Whatcom County Health Board