

CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

July 8, 2019

Submitted via www.regulations.gov

Office of General Counsel, Rules Docket Clerk
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW, Room 10276
Washington, DC 20410-0500

Re: HUD Docket No. FR-6124-P-01, RIN 2501-AD89 Comments in Response to Proposed Rulemaking:
Housing and Community Development Act of 1980: Verification of Eligible Status

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) in response to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) proposed rule, to express our strong opposition to the changes regarding "verification of eligible status," published in the Federal Register on May 10, 2019 (RIN 2501-AD89; HUD Docket No. FR-6124-P-01). Our organization opposes the proposed rule because it will harm a significant number of Texas families, including thousands of U.S. citizen children. In Texas, 26% of children have a parent who is not a U.S. citizen (this includes both those with an authorized immigration status and those who are undocumented). We urge the rule to be withdrawn in its entirety, and that HUD's long-standing regulations remain in effect.

The Benedictine Sisters of Boerne, Texas, founded CPPP in 1985 to advance public policy solutions for expanding access to health care. We became an independent, tax-exempt organization in 1999, and over time our focus has expanded to include economic opportunity and fiscal policy. We are based in Austin, Texas, and work statewide. At CPPP, we believe in a Texas that offers everyone the chance to compete and succeed in life. Administrative advocacy is one important way we use data and analysis to enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential.

CPPP studies and advocates for public policy to enhance the futures of all low-income Texans, and we work to protect the ability of families to meet their most basic needs, including health care, education, and food access. Housing is known to be an important social determinant of health, and reducing access to affordable housing, as this proposed rule would do, will not only expose vulnerable children, seniors, and Texans with disabilities to potential homelessness, but also force families who have lost housing supports to divert more of their limited incomes to expensive temporary shelter options like motels, disrupting access to schools, increasing risk of hunger, and leaving less income available to meet basic medical expenses that may be required of low-income Medicare recipients. (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/what-is-health>).

A recent report estimates that over 5,700 Texas households receiving rental assistance include a family member who would be ineligible under the proposed rule due to immigration status, causing the family to choose between splitting up, or leaving their current housing. Texas' households receiving housing assistance also include over 7,400 seniors with eligible immigration statuses, but who may face challenges complying with the proposed rule requirement for all citizens and older immigrants to document their citizenship or immigration status. The same report also notes that the proposed rule will disproportionately harm people of color, particularly Hispanic household members, and over half of those affected will be children. (**Demographic Data Highlight Potential Harm of New Trump Proposal to Restrict Housing Assistance**, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/demographic-data-highlight-potential-harm-of-new-trump-proposal-to-restrict-housing>)

The proposed HUD rule change would harm overall economic well-being in our state, which is home to about 5 million foreign-born residents, and where more than one in four children has a non-U.S. citizen parent (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/TX>; <https://www.kff.org/report-section/potential-effects-of-public-charge-changes-on-health-coverage-for-citizen-children-appendix/>). The longstanding HUD policy of allowing pro-rata housing supports for families that include an ineligible immigrant has worked well for years, and protects the integrity of eligibility for U.S. citizens and immigrants with an eligible status. To cause vulnerable low-income families now to lose their support will also result in an unfunded cost-shift from the federal government to Texas' local governments. Texas communities will bear additional fiscal burdens of caring for vulnerable residents such as frail elders without the federal fiscal partnership that housing assistance can confer. Immigrants are fully woven into the fabric of Texan life and economy, and policies which harm their economic mobility harm all Texans.

As we stated above, the proposed rule will hurt not only immigrants who lack a qualifying status, but also their entire families including thousands of U.S. citizens, and their local communities which will have to deal with increased homelessness with less federal support. We urge HUD to immediately withdraw its current proposal, and dedicate its efforts to advancing policies that strengthen—rather than undermine—the ability of immigrants to support themselves and their families in the future. If we want our communities to thrive, everyone in those communities must be able to stay together and get the care, services and support they need to remain healthy and productive.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed rulemaking. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Associate Director Anne Dunkelberg at dunkelberg@cphp.org.

Sincerely,

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