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**HEALTH CARE OR GREEN CARD: PUBLIC CHARGE RULE CREATES A CHOICE NO FAMILY SHOULD HAVE TO MAKE**

**Lake Oswego, Ore. – February 25, 2020 --** A new federal rule now in effect could jeopardize access to health care for those seeking permanent legal status in the U.S. by allowing the government to take into consideration use of certain public services, including Medicaid.

The “public charge” rule could force legal immigrants to make a wrenching choice: sign up for health care coverage for their loved ones or pursue citizenship.

**Oregon’s hospitals are joining other health care providers, labor unions and civil rights activists to denounce the rule change as a step backward in access to coverage and the improved health that comes with it.**

“Oregon’s hospitals and health systems work every day to provide care for those who need it and ensure patients have access to programs that provide critical services,” said Becky Hultberg, President and CEO of the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems. “While enrolling people in insurance coverage is of critical importance, given the public charge rule, hospitals recognize and understand the risk for individuals and families seeking permanent residence status, as it could jeopardize their citizenship.”

Hultberg said gaining access to coverage should not jeopardize the permanent legal status (obtaining a green card) of those living and working in Oregon.

The new public charge rule is the result of a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court allowing the Department of Homeland Security to reject applicants who have accepted public benefits including housing, medical assistance, and nutrition supports. Avoiding these programs will have detrimental health impacts for these legal immigrants.

The public charge rule does not apply to all immigrants, only those 21 and older applying for green cards or visas from the U.S. Refugees, those who have been granted asylum, some visa holders and other categories are exempt. Those already with a green card are not affected. Immigrants who have been in the U.S. for more than five years and are legal residents are eligible for Medicaid. Undocumented immigrants are not. The rule took effect on February 24, 2020.

Oregon’s hospitals treat everyone, regardless of their ability to pay or immigration status.

Medicaid provides comprehensive and coordinated care that goes beyond hospital services and includes dental health, behavioral health, and prescription drug coverage. Expanding Medicaid and supporting coordinated care organizations has been a cornerstone in Oregon’s health system transformation efforts, expanding access to thousands of Oregonians.

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***About OAHHS:*** *Founded in 1934, OAHHS is a statewide, nonprofit trade association that works closely with local and national government leaders, business and citizen coalitions, and other professional health care organizations to enhance and promote community health and to continue improving Oregon’s innovative health care delivery system.*