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## **NDSC STATEMENT ON EXPANDED “PUBLIC CHARGE” REGULATIONS**

*October 22, 2018, Atlanta, GA* – On October 10, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced an expansion of the [“public charge” rule](#). This proposed rule would amend the standards for when a person may be considered a “public charge”, which would make it significantly harder for people with disabilities to enter the U.S., immigrate to the U.S. or to become legal permanent residents.

Under current law, non-citizens can be denied entry to the U.S. and deemed to be a “public charge” if they are likely to use cash benefits like Social Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or if they live in an institution. The proposed new rule vastly expands the list of programs and benefits that would be disqualifying for entry into or permanent legal status in the U.S. in that it would consider a person’s receipt of Medicaid (including Medicaid Long Term Services & Supports), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Section 8 Housing Vouchers and more. It would also heavily weight other factors such as health, income, level of education and employment status. Considering these factors will mean that large numbers of immigrants with disabilities – including Down syndrome – could be denied entry to the U.S. or denied a green card for permanent residence. A further concern is that these new regulations will lead many people with disabilities to disenroll from or avoid applying for needed healthcare, housing and other benefits for fear that their families will be flagged and separated.

NDSC believes that an expanded scope of the “public charge” rule may have unintended consequences for individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities. For example, a family seeking a visa for entry for a medical procedure or conference could be denied solely on the basis of having a child with Down syndrome or another disability. Additionally, families wishing to immigrate to, or become permanent residents of, the United States may be denied because one member of the family has a disability. “The expansion of the public charge rule assumes that the lives of people with Down syndrome and other disabilities are less valuable to our society and seems to ignore the significant contributions of people with Down syndrome,” said David Tolleson, Executive Director for the National Down Syndrome Congress. “We would also hate to see this rule impact a family’s ability to enter the U.S. to get necessary medical care or attend the NDSC Annual Convention, the world’s largest conference for people with Down syndrome and their families, that draws thousands of attendees domestically and internationally”.

NDSC will be providing comments on this proposed rule by the deadline, which is 12/10/18.

### **About the National Down Syndrome Congress**

Founded in 1973, the National Down Syndrome Congress is the country’s oldest organization for people with Down syndrome, their families, and the professionals who work with them. A 501(c)(3) non-profit advocacy organization, the NDSC provides support and information about issues related to Down syndrome throughout the lifespan, as well as on matters of public policy relating to disability rights. The National Down Syndrome Congress is committed to creating a national climate in which all people will recognize and embrace the value and dignity of people with Down syndrome. For more information about the NDSC, please visit our website at [www.ndscenter.org](http://www.ndscenter.org).

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