
Administration's Proposed Housing Rule Would Cause Thousands to Lose Their Homes, Most of Them Children

Statement by Robert Greenstein, President

The Administration's proposal would break up families and cause thousands of citizens and eligible immigrants to lose their homes. Contrary to the Administration's rhetoric, it wouldn't free up resources to provide housing assistance to more Americans. Nor would the policy reduce spending on housing assistance.

Individuals who are not U.S. citizens or immigrants with certain immigration statuses are already ineligible for housing assistance. If a household includes some eligible and some ineligible individuals, housing assistance is prorated so that only citizens and eligible immigrants whose status has been verified by the Department of Homeland Security receive assistance.

The proposed rule would bar *U.S. citizens and eligible immigrants* from receiving federal housing assistance if they share a home with an immigrant family member who's ineligible due to their immigration status. (Some ineligible immigrants are in the country lawfully but do not have a status that qualifies them for housing assistance, such as those with Temporary Protected Status.) Tens of thousands of citizens and eligible immigrants would lose their homes; thousands of others would have to choose between separating from their loved ones and losing their homes. All of the individuals newly barred from receiving housing assistance would be U.S. citizens and eligible immigrants, and a substantial majority of these would be children.

The current proration policy ensures that ineligible people don't receive aid without denying assistance to eligible family members or forcing families to separate. The Administration's proposal would abandon this sensible approach, which both Republican and Democratic administrations have followed for more than two decades.

The proposal would also threaten housing assistance for millions of households that remain eligible for assistance and consist only of U.S. citizens or eligible immigrants. It would require tens of thousands of housing agencies and private owners to collect documents *proving* the citizenship of more than 9 million assisted residents who have already attested, under penalty of perjury, that they are U.S. citizens, as well as the citizenship of future applicants for assistance. And it would require some 120,000 elderly immigrants to submit documents indicating their status. If individuals are unable to produce these documents in the timeframe permitted, they can lose their housing assistance and, in turn, lose their homes.

Currently, housing authorities and owners can require verification of citizenship status if they have reason to believe that the attestation is problematic. The Administration has produced no evidence of a significant problem with faulty attestations, yet it is proposing a massive increase in red tape that would cause difficulties for housing authorities and private owners as well as struggling households that need assistance but may not be able to readily produce certain documents proving their citizenship.

These proposed changes would appear to carry out part of the Trump Administration's agenda of sharply altering our nation's immigration policies and making life more difficult for immigrants. The barrage of policies the Administration has put forward in this area run counter to our nation's centuries-long experience — still true today — of immigrants coming to the United States and building a better life for themselves and for future generations while contributing to their communities and the broader society. Coming on top of other executive orders and actions that have placed various immigrants at risk, the draft rule is another severe and unjustified measure that would harm both immigrant families and U.S. citizens and ill serve our country. Threatening people who want to build better lives for themselves and their families is contrary to the national interest and our nation's most cherished values.

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