

New immigration rule could cost New Mexicans millions

Written by By Sharon Kayne Communications Director, NM Voices for Children
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Homeland Security rules could cost thousands of jobs

ALBUQUERQUE - New Mexico could lose an estimated \$146 million in federal funds if the Department of Homeland Security is able to implement rules it promulgated regarding government benefits, including nutrition and health care services. That lack of federal funds would translate to a loss to the state's gross domestic product (GDP) of as much as \$285 million, as well as 1,937 jobs, and \$17 million in state tax revenue. That's according to a policy brief co-released Nov. 25 by the Fiscal Policy Institute of New York and New Mexico Voices for Children.

The new rules would add several safety-net programs to the current list of benefits that, if used, may be counted against an immigrant when they apply for permanent residency or to extend a visa. Five federal courts have handed down injunctions that have put a stop to the implementation of the rule on the grounds that it is likely unlawful. The DHS is appealing the decisions.

"Immigrants come to the U.S. today for the same reason they have come for hundreds of years - to build a better life for their families," Executive Director of New Mexico Voices for Children James Jimenez said. "As a group, immigrants are hard workers, but anyone can hit a rough patch and need a hand. That's why we have safety-net programs - to help people get back on their feet and contribute to their communities."

Even though not yet implemented, the rule change is having a chilling effect on families that

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have members who are immigrants - meaning people have stopped using or not applied for benefits they are eligible to receive due to concern for themselves or a family member who is an immigrant. If the rule is implemented, the policy brief estimates that it would have a chilling effect on 170,000 New Mexicans, including 70,000 children - almost all of whom (60,000) are U.S. citizens.

“Aside from sending the message that if you’re not young, healthy, and wealthy, you’re not welcome in the U.S., the point of the rule change seems to be to ensure that immigrant families cannot fully thrive,” Jimenez pointed out. “It just seems to be more scapegoating from the Trump Administration that will end up hurting New Mexico children and their families.”

The policy brief, “Only Wealthy Immigrants Need Apply: The Chilling Effects of ‘Public Charge,’” is available online at **nmvoices.org/archives/13631**.

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