

Policy Workgroup Updates CIMH General Meeting on April 16th

Federal Legislation and Action Steps

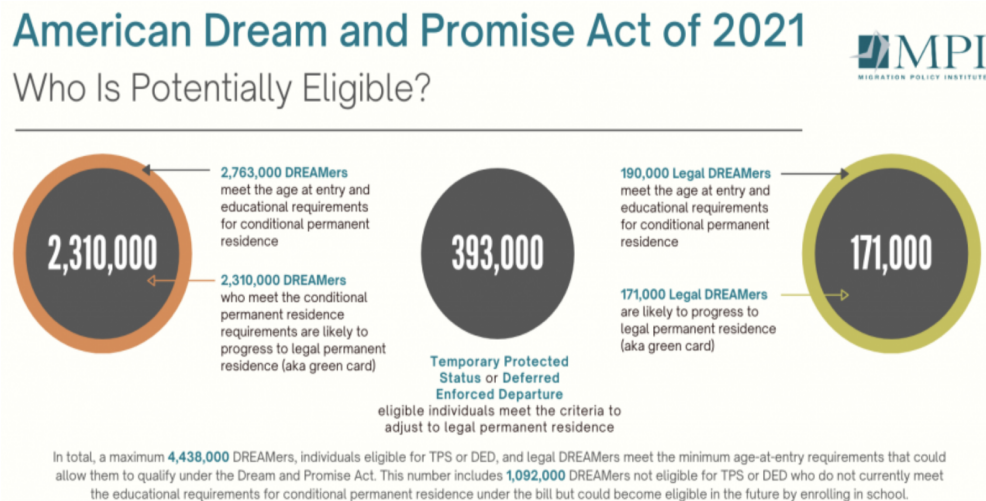
Congress on recess until April 11th.

As of March 9th the Public Charge Rule under the Trump Administration is no longer valid. The 1999 guidance for public charge goes back in effect. This means that SNAP, Medicaid (with the exception of long-term institutionalization), Section 8 Housing & Public Housing are no longer included as part of public charge. See CIMH listserv announcements for more detailed information, also see [PIF-IL](#).

The American Dream & Promise Act of 2021 passed the House vote on March 18th. President Biden issued a [statement](#) in support of this legislation and working with Congress to support pathways to citizenship. See the [MPI report](#) on eligibility (graphic included below).

Advocacy groups have raised issues related to “secondary review”-- > These exclusionary provisions are more expansive than current immigration law and reinforce inequities in the criminal legal system (i.e., over-policing and over-prosecution of immigrants and racial and ethnic minorities). This would bar many immigrants from lawful status at the secondary review, leaving them vulnerable to ICE; for those who already served time, this is double punishment.

ICIRR Action Step: Call Senators Durbin and Duckworth to fight for removal of exclusionary bars. ICIRR noted that IL has led legislation that shows how to craft policies that protect all (regardless of criminal record) like the Trust Act and the Chicago City Welcoming Ordinance.



The Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2021 also passed the House on March 18th. This bill would provide legal status and a pathway to citizenship for hundreds of thousands undocumented farmworkers, as well as overhauls the current H-2A nonimmigrant visa program for temporary agricultural workers. Biden also issued [a statement](#) in support.

The Citizenship for Essential Workers Act was introduced on March 18th in the House by Reps. Castro and Lieu, and in the Senate by Sens. Padilla and Warren. See this [Farmworker Justice fact sheet](#) and this [NILC statement](#) for more information. Three quarters of all immigrants in the workforce work in essential roles, including more than 5 million undocumented.

The Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act, [introduced on March 25](#) by Rep. Jayapal, Rep. Booker & Rep. Smith ends the use of private detention facilities altogether, repeals mandatory detention, stops family detention, and prohibits solitary confinement while also restoring due process and increasing oversight, accountability, and transparency measures.

March 31st: Biden's Build Back Better Plan did not include undocumented workers and we are called to continue action efforts toward citizenship pathways for undocumented essential workers, immigrant youth, TPS holder, and their families.

April 14: The COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act led by Sen. Hirono and Rep. Grace-Meng, which aims to make it easier to publicly report pandemic-related hate crimes and would create a new position at the Justice Department specifically to review such reports, passed a procedural hurdle in the Senate in a 92-6 vote.

U.S. Asylum

- February 6th: Dept of State announced the end to Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACAs) with Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.
- March 16th: DHS issued a statement about the situation at the southwest border (see [here](#)) and this will continue to present as a barrier to The American Dream and Promise Act legislation in the Senate. Senate Republicans asking for more border securitization to be part of immigration bills.
- Mid-April: Biden Administration announced [new ACAs with Mexico & Honduras](#) to encourage police and military to monitor borders. The militarization of borders is not a policy solution, and does not address the environmental and sociopolitical push factors, the consequences of the pandemic, or the longstanding damage created by US foreign policy. MPI released a [report on migration management in Latin America](#) that provides a glimpse into migration policy in Mexico and Central America.

TPS

- March 8th: Secretary Mayorkas designates TPS for Venezuelans for 18 months (see white house statement [here](#))
- March 12th: Biden designates TPS for Myanmar (formerly Burma) for 18 months
- March 19th: TPS for Syria is extended and redesignated for 18 months (through 9/30/22)

Refugee Resettlement

- Biden has not signed a new Presidential Determination (PD) so the policies under Trump remain. This means that refugees who were cleared for travel are having their plans cancelled because they do not meet criteria from the last Administration (e.g., Muslim countries, bans based on previous quotas, etc).

- Less than 2,000 have been resettled-- not anticipated to be close to 62,500 ceiling by end of this fiscal year (Sept. 30) but we are hopeful for a late summer surge.
- The refugee program, the announcement of a new PD, etc. is also heavily influenced by the crisis at the border and the pandemic (and plans for vaccinating arrivals).
- **As of 4/16/21 just after our meeting:** The refugee cap will remain at 15,000 refugee arrivals for this fiscal year which is a backstep from the proposed 62,500 ceiling cap for FY21. Although restrictions will be lifted from countries blocked by the Trump Administration (which is a welcome revision to refugee policies), it still leaves so many refugees in perilous situations as they await the next opportunity for resettlement. Click [HERE](#) for more on this developing story. As of 4/17/21, the Biden administration backtracks and announced new cap will be released in May (see [HERE](#)).
- **IL Update:** In collaboration with IDPH and the City of Chicago, vaccines are being made available to refugee serving organizations in an attempt to increase vaccine rates in the refugee communities. By vaccinating frontline resettlement staff, we then in turn are charged with helping communities get more access. Local clinics are also partnering with refugee agencies for administering doses to eligible refugees directly, allowing resettlement agencies to create patient lists and organize vaccine days so clients can work with trusted partners to get the vaccine.

USCIS News and other immigration updates:

- February 24th: Biden revokes bans on visas during pandemic that was initiated via Trump Proclamation back in April 2020
- Any updates on USCIS backlog and immigration court processing?
- HUD formally withdrew the proposed rule on “mixed-status families” that would have prohibited mixed-status families from living in public housing or benefiting from federal housing programs. See [here](#).
- April 14: White House created a new position and appointed Erika L. Moritsugu as deputy assistant to the President and liaison to the A.A.P.I community.

Mental Health Updates (Thanks to Guylaine Herzig at Heartland Alliance):

The Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2021, S. 828, was introduced in the Senate by Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). This would improve access to MH services provided by LCPCs and LMFTs for Medicare recipients. Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Representative John Katko (R-NY) introduced the companion legislation (HR 432) in January in the House. This bipartisan legislation would require Medicare to finally recognize LMHCs as Medicare-eligible providers of covered behavioral health services to older adults and other Medicare beneficiaries.

You can use [this link](#) below to show support for this bill that would help our elders access care and emotional support (prefilled message available for use).

Here is the [link to the Press Release](#). This legislation is identical to bills introduced in the Senate (S. 286, now S. 828) in the last Congress, the 116th Congress (2019-2020). Last year, the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (HR 945 at that time, now HR 432) passed out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee without any opposition. This prior bill had a total of 130

Members of Congress who cosponsored this bill, which is a record level of support for any LMHCs in the Medicare legislation. The first step in moving this legislation through Congress is encouraging Members of Congress to cosponsor this bill. Although lobbyists for LMHCs and other associations who support this legislation will be urging Congress members to cosponsor this bill, it is absolutely essential that Members of Congress hear from you, as a constituent, that you support including LMHCs as Medicare providers. With a large number of cosponsors early in the new 117th Congress that began, it makes it more likely that the Senate and House of Representatives will take up this legislation in upcoming hearings.

IL Legislation and Action Steps

April 23rd is the date for the third reading on substantive bills

Defenders for All (HB2790): Would amend existing law to allow public defenders in counties with more than 3M people the discretion to represent their noncitizen clients in immigration court. [See fact sheet here.](#) **Passed the IL House yesterday!!!**

Higher Education-Dream Resources (HB3438) assigned to Higher Education Committee on 3/16/21, which would require all public universities and community colleges in IL to have a designated liaison for students with undocumented status and encourages them to establish resource centers that would include academic counseling, peer support, mental health and legal supports (beginning 2022-23 AY).

Illinois Way Forward (SB667): Amends the Trust Act to further restrict police from cooperating with ICE. **On April 14, passed out of the Senate Executive Committee!**

Witness Slips Signed on behalf of CIMH Policy Workgroup (March 2021)

- TEAACH Act HB376 the K-12 Education Committee voted in favor on March 17th
Passed the House vote, now on to Senate! Action Step: Write your legislators about the [TEAACH Act](#)
- Earned Income Credit Expansion (to include ITIN filers) HB2792 (3/25)
- Safer Communities Act HB3215 (3/26)
- Health Equity and Access to Care Act HB3232 (3/26)