



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

For science. For action. For health.

February 9, 2015

SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL: NewAmericans@who.eop.gov

Dear Directors Muñoz and Rodríguez:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals who champion the health of all people and communities, I write to thank the White House Task Force on New Americans for the opportunity to provide input on the development of a federal integration strategy for immigrants. We applaud the Administration for its efforts to provide temporary relief from deportation for millions of immigrants living and working in the U.S. and strong commitment to improving our nation's health care system.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has transformed the lives of people granted the opportunity to stay with their families and more fully contribute to their communities without the constant threat of deportation. Additional individuals and families will now have the opportunity to benefit from the expansion of DACA and the new deferred action program for parents, the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability. However, we are deeply concerned with actions that have put affordable health care out of reach for current DACA grantees and with the continued use of this approach for additional recipients of deferred action.

Recognizing the importance of access to health care, the Department of Health and Human Services originally included individuals that have been granted deferred action as lawfully present for the purposes of determining eligibility under the Affordable Care Act. The list of immigration categories considered eligible was later amended by a rule to exclude young people granted deferred action under DACA. Additionally, CMS issued similar guidance to carve out those with DACA eligibility from Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program under the state option.

Based on the incontrovertible relationship between health insurance, access to care and population health, a central pillar of the ACA rests on near-universal access to health insurance to improve the public's health. The exclusion of DACA and DAPA recipients undermines the law's spirit and fundamental goal to expand affordable health care to uninsured individuals. Continued restrictions to accessing care for new Americans will likely contribute to long-lasting health consequences, more preventable deaths and higher medical costs.

We urge the Task Force to allow individuals granted relief under the President's Immigration Accountability Executive Actions to participate in affordable health coverage options under the ACA, and Medicaid and CHIP in states that have taken up expanded coverage options. APHA

stands ready to work with you to advance opportunities that help build healthier families and a stronger nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "G".

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director