Access to Benefits is Essential for Families in North Carolina to Thrive

For over 25 years, a policy passed in 1996 has arbitrarily denied lawfully present immigrant families access to critical health and social services, such as Medicaid, CHIP, and SNAP.

An estimated **106,700 people in North Carolina** are excluded from Medicaid & CHIP coverage.¹

- Over **64,100 are green card holders**
- Over **20,400 are DACA recipients**
- Over **22,100 are TPS holders**

In NC, there are **168,500 people** living in immigrant families with low incomes where at least one member of the household is excluded from SNAP eligibility because of their status.²

Nationwide, an estimated over 3.4 million immigrants authorized to be in the United States face barriers to public benefits eligibility due to their immigration status.

**Barriers to immigrants hurt communities of color.** Nearly 10% of Black people in America are immigrants, and immigrants account for 24% of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, 33% of Latinos, and 65% of Asian Americans.³

In NC the uninsured rate for noncitizens is **over six times higher** than U.S. citizens—43%, compared to 7%—likely because many are excluded from public health care programs.⁴

In North Carolina, over **435,000 children** live in a mixed status family. Over **59,000 children** have a parent who faces barriers to public benefits because of their immigration status and are more likely to live in low-income households.⁵

Despite the vast majority of children in mixed status families being U.S. citizens themselves, they are over 2X less likely to access health coverage they may be eligible for in part due to their parent's immigration status.⁷

25% of children in low-income households in the state had an immigrant parent in 2022.⁸

These exclusions hurt not only immigrant families, but also local and state governments, hospitals, food banks, and direct service organizations. Immigrant families' needs for health, food, and shelter do not go away; they only get shifted. **Congress must repeal these restrictions by passing:**

**The LIFT the BAR Act (H.R. 4170/S. 2038)** to repeal the 1996 restrictions on lawfully present immigrants' eligibility for public benefits, aligning the federal safety net's eligibility standards with the Affordable Care Act.

¹ Estimates based on CLASP analysis of Office of Homeland Security Statistics 2018-2022 Lawful Permanent Resident State Profiles, accounting for the number of refugees/asylees in each state and state policies which impact public benefit eligibility. The estimates of pregnant individuals are calculated by using the 2022 general fertility rate.


⁶ Over 20% of children in NC live in a mixed status family.


North Carolina is one of ten states that administers public benefit programs like Medicaid and SNAP through a county-based system instead of a statewide system. The county-based system creates unique challenges based on county capacity to provide assistance and training. It also creates the potential for policies to be understood and implemented differently based on interpretation. Inaccurate interpretations of these policies means that someone goes without benefits they need and are eligible for.

“Some counties may say that [clients] are not eligible based on their interpretation of that piece of policy; [but] that other counties may say that they are. We all try our best to work with the same guidelines, but there is always a grey area on how you interpret certain things.”

- North Carolina county HHS stakeholder

North Carolina has the sixth highest number of migrant farmworkers in the nation, but because of the restrictions in place, migrant farmworkers, with few exceptions, are ineligible to receive Medicaid and CHIP for themselves or their families.

Even when immigrants or their children are eligible for coverage, the confusing patchwork of eligibility leaves families without the ability to get access to the benefits they need.

“The farmworkers are not here long enough for the institution to get the paperwork through, to get the kid covered.”

- Staff member, North Carolina community-based organization

Supporting the LIFT the BAR Act (H.R. 4170/S. 2038) is critical in providing North Carolina with the resources it needs to ensure all families in the state can thrive.