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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***Legal Aid, Make the Road NY, Empire Justice Center Release
New Edition of Screening Tool For Community-Based
Advocates To Use With Immigrant Clients In Response to
Implementation Of New Public Charge Rules Today***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Make The Road New York, and Empire Justice Center unveiled a new version of their [Public Charge Screening Tool](#) to address client needs caused by the implementation of the new public charge rules today. The tool is designed to assist community-based, social services, and advocacy organizations throughout New York State with answering client questions related to a new public charge rule issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which goes into effect today. Since taking office, the Trump administration has been committed in its attack against low-income immigrants of color. One of its priorities has been to transform the system of family-based immigration by redefining millions of immigrants as future public charges and to deny them green cards as a result.

The [Public Charge Screening Tool](#) is designed to be used by advocates and case workers who interface with people who are concerned about the impact receiving public benefits may have on their immigration options. The Tool will (a) help identify people who are going to face a public charge determination so that they can be referred for legal help if they need it; (b) help assure people who are not subject to public charge that there are no adverse immigration consequences related to their use of benefits; and (c) make sure people have accurate information about the current state of the law on public charge.

“Even before the public charge rule was implemented, it has caused low-income New Yorkers and their families serious concerns about whether they are putting their own immigration goals or those of their families at risk when it comes to using public benefits,” said **Susan Welber, Staff Attorney in the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Public Charge Screening Tool was designed to address the demands community-based organizations and other advocates face as they help counsel clients on such concerns. Where the screening indicates that the person being screened needs to speak to a lawyer, information about referrals around the state of New York is provided.”

“The release of this Public Charge Screening Tool is critical to advocates and immigrant communities, as the Trump administration’s racist wealth test is set to take effect today,” said **Javier. H. Valdés, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York**. “We have been using this tool to help identify community members who need further information about the possible impacts to their family, and make sure they receive accurate information about the current state of public charge.”

“The implementation of the public charge rule today is a devastating blow for all Americans. The rule is heartless, cruel, and betrays our core values as a nation of immigrants. This public charge screening tool will guide community-based organizations in helping families make crucial decisions that may carry life-changing consequences,” said **Kristin Brown, President & CEO of Empire Justice Center**, a statewide civil legal aid organization.

Background on Public Charge Rule Change

On Monday, February 24, 2020, a new Rule on public charge issued by DHS will go into effect. The U.S. Supreme Court has issued two decisions which allow the government to start using the Rule across the country, despite continued litigation in *Make the Road New York, et al. v. Cuccinelli, et al.* and other cases in which courts had blocked the new Rule from taking effect. Because of the Supreme Court’s decisions, while the litigation plays out in the courts, people who face public charge will be subject to the new Rule. The Department of State also issued a new public charge rule which became effective today. That rule is the subject of a case called *Make the Road New York et al. v. Pompeo et al.* The Legal Aid Society and our partners will be in court on a preliminary injunction motion to stop that rule on Friday, February 28, 2020.

The rule raises the income, language, and wealth requirements for immigrants seeking to become permanent residents, and penalizes immigrants for even the most minimal use of public benefits such as Medicaid. Plaintiffs in *Make the Road New York, et al. v. Cuccinelli, et al.* and many other community-based organizations have devoted immense resources to educating their constituent communities about the effects of the rule and have documented the widespread fear the rule has already caused, with many immigrants disenrolling from crucial nutritional, health, and housing assistance. The new Rule will cause particular harm to Latinx, Black, Asian, and disabled immigrants.

The Public Charge Screening Tool can be viewed and downloaded here:
<https://bit.ly/39YqPgh>

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>