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Public charge ruling a devastating blow for immigrants

BY ANN TOBACK

In a blow to immigrant rights activists across the country, Monday's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court allows the Trump Administration to implement a devastating public charge provision.

Since taking office, the Trump Administration has done everything in its power to close America's "golden door," as inscribed in the base of the Statue of Liberty, to those who come here in search of safety and opportunity. One of the

ways the Trump Administration has sought to achieve this is through enacting changes to the long-existing public charge provision – a test that is used by the federal government to determine if an individual seeking to immigrate is likely to become dependent on the government for subsistence.

Make no mistake, this rule is tantamount to a racially motivated wealth test that punishes lower-income immigrants of color in favor of those with more wealth and higher levels of education, more likely to come from pre-

dominantly white countries.

On appeal, circuit courts in other parts of the country reversed the lower court decisions to block the new rule, opening the way for it to go into effect. In early January, we were able to let out a small sigh of relief, as a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit here in New York ruled to keep a nationwide halt in place.

But after Trump's Department of Justice appealed to the Supreme Court, the Court on Monday agreed to lift the hold that kept his draconian

policy from going into immediate effect.

This is personal for us. For 120 years, the Workers Circle has stood with those whom America refused to welcome with open arms.

The American Dream was first, and is still, an immigrant's dream; it has always promised a better life. But imposing arbitrary rules and regulations for access to that dream is unjust and irresponsible. The government should be making it easier, not harder, for working class immigrants to move toward citizenship.

It is a mistake to view people in need as a burden. In so doing, we fail to recognize that social supports and welfare programs are more than just charitable "handouts." They are an investment in people and potential.

While the court has given the green light to the Trump administration to close the doors on countless immigrants, we will continue to work to make the public charge a thing of the past.

Ann Toback is the Chief Executive Officer of the Workers Circle (formerly the Workmen's Circle), a Jewish social justice nonprofit.