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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 9, 2018****Proposed changes to public charge aim to frighten immigrants**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, Calif. — On Oct. 10, the Trump administration will place proposed changes to public charge policy on the federal register, starting the 60-day clock for public comment. To address the apprehension and fear that these proposed changes have brought upon local immigrant communities, Community Bridges is hosting a press conference on Oct. 11 at the agency’s headquarters, located at 519 Main Street in Watsonville. Speakers will include Congressman Jimmy Panetta, Community Bridges Chief Executive Officer Raymon Cancino, a member of Watsonville City Council and other elected officials.

Public charge is an element of immigration law that can affect an immigrant’s legal status based on their use of public benefits. If approved, proposed changes to the public charge policy would expand the list of programs and services that are considered during immigration proceedings. Community Bridges seeks to reassure clients that services provided by the agency will not be impacted.

“We are asking the public to hold off disenrolling from services until they have sought legal advice about immigration,” said Cancino. “The services we provide—including the Women, Infants and Children and Meals on Wheels programs—are exempt from the final proposal and will not be considered in public charge rulings. We also ask the public to review official sources to determine which programs and immigrants are impacted, as the stakes are too high to take someone’s word for it.”

Many immigration statuses and programs are exempt from the final proposal, leaving hope that many working immigrant families will not be harmed by the policy changes. Additionally, with a 30-day period for implementation once the final ruling goes into effect, families will have time to make decisions concerning their use of services.

“For all immigrants who will be impacted, we have time to act and you are not alone,” said Cancino. “Community Bridges urges the public to call your representatives or use the official federal register comment link, and take a moment to share with your congressional leaders how this will affect our communities.”

To access the comment link, go to <https://www.federalregister.gov> starting Wednesday Oct. 10. More information regarding proposed changes to public charge can be found at <https://www.uscis.gov/legal-resources/proposed-change-public-charge-ground-inadmissibility>.

ABOUT COMMUNITY BRIDGES:

Community Bridges envisions a thriving community where every person has the opportunity to unleash their full potential. The Community Bridges family of ten programs delivers essential services, provides equitable access to resources, and advocates for health and dignity across every stage of life. These programs include Meals on Wheels for Santa Cruz County; Elderday Adult Day Health Care; Lift Line; Child Development Division; Child & Adult Care Food Program; Women, Infants and Children (WIC); La Manzana Community Resources; Live Oak Community Resources; Nueva Vista Community Resources; and Mountain Community Resources. To learn more, please visit communitybridges.org.