

Immigrants Access to Public Benefits: Changes Under The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA or H.R.1)

Divya Nair, Senior Policy Analyst for Children and Families



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
H.R.1 changes to immigrants' access to benefits will impact thousands of Rhode Islanders	4
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	4
Medicaid, also known as Rte Care, and Medicare	5
Other Changes to Healthcare Benefits	6
Restricting Immigrant Access to Tax Credits	6
Other Federal Actions Impacting Immigrants' Access to State and Federal Programs	7
H.R.1 Increased Fees for Immigration Applications and Motions	8
Conclusion	9
A Quick Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Key Federal Means-Tested Programs in Rhode Island	10
Glossary of Terms	11

About the Economic Progress Institute:

The Economic Progress Institute leads transformational and equitable budget and policy changes in Rhode Island through research, analysis, education, and advocacy toward racial and economic justice for low- and-modest income Rhode Islanders.

Introduction

One hundred and sixty thousand Rhode Islanders are immigrants. That is nearly one in seven, making up 14.7% of the state's population.¹ Immigrants have made significant investments in Rhode Island, including their skills, labor, entrepreneurship, and significant tax revenue. In 2023, immigrant households in Rhode Island paid \$1.8 billion in federal, state, and local tax contributions.² Many arrive seeking safety from war, persecution, and violence, and the United States has long upheld humanitarian protections to help families rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities.

Despite immigrants contributions, federal welfare policies have restricted their access to public benefits for decades, with lasting consequences for economic and social equity.

The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA), also known as House Resolution 1 (H.R.1), passed on July 4, 2025, cuts nearly \$1 trillion in funding for essential public benefit programs like Medicaid and SNAP to finance major tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy. H.R.1 also allocates \$170 billion for expanded immigration and border enforcement, including expanded detention capacity, border wall construction, and increased funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Meanwhile major administrative and program costs are shifted onto states, particularly those choosing to serve some eligible residents despite immigration status. H.R.1 also further restricts eligibility for many lawfully present immigrants, removing access to critical federal programs and leaving families without the safety nets their tax dollars help support. H.R.1 intentionally targets immigrant communities by both limiting access to vital benefits and by expanding funding for punitive enforcement systems.

H.R.1 marks a deepening erosion of immigrants' status in the U.S. and reinforces the notion that some people, because of their immigration status, are less entitled to fundamental supports, effectively removing entire groups of immigrants from certain programs and services. These distinctions go beyond access to services and benefits, as they determine who is deemed deserving of care, stability, and dignity. This growing divide undermines the principle of equal protection under the law and weakens the moral and civic fabric that binds communities together.

This policy brief details the federal changes under H.R.1 and their impact on Rhode Island, including which immigrant groups lose eligibility for critical benefits and how these cuts will affect families, communities, and the broader state economy.

H.R.1 changes to immigrants' access to benefits will impact thousands of Rhode Islanders

Following the passage of H.R.1, only a narrow set of lawfully present immigrants retain access to Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), SNAP, and Affordable Care Act premium tax credits.

These groups are:

- Lawful Permanent Residents (green card holders) after a five-year waiting period
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants
- Individuals living in the United States under Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with Palau, Micronesia, or the Marshall Islands

All other lawfully present individuals would lose eligibility, eliminating protections for groups that have been historically protected, including:

- Refugees resettled in the United States
- People granted asylum or withholding of removal based on persecution risks in their home country
- Survivors of domestic violence with pending or approved status under the Violence Against Women Act
- Survivors of human trafficking with pending or approved T visas
- People with Temporary Protected Status

H.R.1 also establishes new work reporting mandates and stricter eligibility redetermination rules. This puts many working-class families, including immigrant households, at greater risk of losing benefits to which they are already entitled. These changes also increase administrative hurdles for states and service providers while increasing the likelihood of disenrollment and unmet health and nutrition needs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Although several changes to SNAP in H.R.1 took effect upon its passage on July 4, 2025, the implementation of these policies, including those affecting immigrants' eligibility, has been delayed as the Rhode Island Department of Human Services awaits federal guidance to clarify these new rules and update its administration systems.

Eligibility for noncitizens limited to:

- Lawful Permanent Residents after a five-year waiting period
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants
- Individuals living in the United States under Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with Palau, Micronesia, or the Marshall Islands

In Rhode Island, 2,300 individuals who currently have access to food assistance through SNAP will no longer be eligible due to their immigration status.³

Additionally, there are approximately 11,000 U.S. citizen children enrolled in SNAP with a noncitizen parent or guardian. For the parents or guardians that are newly ineligible for SNAP due to H.R.1, their income is still counted when calculating household benefits. As a result, these families will receive reduced benefits, leaving less money to cover basic food needs each month. A parent losing access to SNAP means that a household could receive up to \$244 less per month to help put food on the table.⁴ By removing other noncitizen groups from eligibility, Rhode Island families and the state economy will lose \$5.5 million in support, since fewer SNAP dollars spent in local stores means less revenue circulating through the state economy.⁵

Other program eligibility changes for SNAP are the expansion of work requirements for able bodied working adults without dependents (ABAWDs). Nearly 10,000 Rhode Islanders, including many children, will be at risk of losing some of their food assistance due to the significant expansion of work requirements.

Work requirements for ABAWDs have been expanded to:

- Raise the exemption age from 54 and older to 65 and older
 - Individuals age 54 to 64 are now subject to work requirements
- Limit the exemption for those with a dependent child from under 18 to under 14
 - Parents with children age 14 through 18 are now subject to work requirements
- Remove exemptions for homeless individuals, veterans, and youth 24 and under who have aged out of foster care
 - Members of these groups are now subject to work requirements

Additional restrictions were also placed on the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), which allows households to deduct part of their utility costs and can increase the SNAP benefit for those who qualify. For households without an elderly or disabled member, third-party energy assistance payments, such as Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), will no longer automatically count towards utility costs and could lead to a decrease in their SNAP benefit. An estimated 2,500 households will lose or have a reduced SUA benefit for SNAP.

Medicaid, also known as Rlte Care, and Medicare

Rhode Island will be mandated to limit Medicaid, also known as Rlte Care, and Medicare to the narrower definition of qualified immigrants under H.R.1 for adults over 19. Children under the age of 19 remain covered under Medicaid regardless of immigration status, due to state law that maintains coverage for all children and pregnant and post-partum individuals.

Eligibility for noncitizens will be limited to Legal Permanent Residents after a five-year waiting period; Cuban and Haitian entrants; COFA migrants for:

- Medicare – enrollment restrictions began on July 4, 2025, and for those currently enrolled but no longer eligible due to immigration status, coverage will end on January 4, 2027
- Medicaid – enrollment restrictions begin October 2026

Lawfully present immigrants over age 19 who do not meet these immigration requirements, such as refugees, asylees, and humanitarian parolees, will be lose access to their health insurance. Roughly 12,000 currently covered adults will lose Medicaid access when the policy takes effect.⁶

H.R.1 establishes a new work reporting requirement, called a “community engagement” requirement, for certain Medicaid expansion enrollees aged 19 to 64, mandating at least 80 hours per month of work, education, or community service (or equivalent income based on the federal minimum wage). While tribal members, parents of children aged 13 and under, and medically frail individuals are exempt, Rhode Island’s roughly 70,000 expansion enrollees will be subject to this policy starting December 31, 2026. Many people who meet the required work hours may still lose coverage because of complicated reporting rules, which act more like barriers to eligibility than true work requirements.

Other Changes to Healthcare Benefits

Starting January 2026, DACA recipients and other lawfully present immigrants with household incomes less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level will be ineligible for the Advanced Premium Tax Credits (APTC), which helps people purchase coverage through the marketplace, also known as HealthSource RI (HSRI).

Starting January 2027, noncitizen eligibility for APTCs is limited to:

- Lawful Permanent Residents after a five-year waiting period
- Cuban and Haitian Entrants
- COFA migrants

Separately, H.R.1 allows the enhanced APTCs, a temporary expansion of the tax credits available to all eligible enrollees under the American Rescue Plan Act, to expire at the end of 2025 for 41,000 Rhode Islanders (unrelated to immigration status) who purchase coverage through HSRI. Those Rhode Islanders losing enhanced APTC's will see the cost of their premiums increase by an average of 85%, about \$459 per month.⁷ The state expects thousands of people to drop coverage, leading to rising healthcare costs and increased pressure on the healthcare system.

Starting October 2026, the federal government will limit federal matching funds that help pay for emergency Medicaid for immigrants who don’t qualify for Medicaid expansion coverage due to their immigration status.⁸

Restricting Immigrant Access to Tax Credits

H.R.1 also makes permanent an existing restriction requiring children to have a Social Security Number (SSN) to receive the Child Tax Credit (CTC). Beginning with tax returns filed in 2026 for Tax Year 2025, the federal CTC will require the SSN of the child and at least one parent. In Rhode Island, 6,500 U.S. citizen children have a parent or parents that only have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), a tax identification number for noncitizens who do not have an SSN. Rhode Island families and the state economy will suffer a loss of \$30.5 million in the first year of implementation.⁹

Beginning with the 2025 Tax Year, the American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) and the Lifetime Learning Credit (LLC), which help to offset the cost of higher education, will require the SSN of the taxpayer, and that of their spouse if filing jointly, and the student for whom the credit is claimed. This will lead to the loss of income tax credits that previously went to these families for filers without SSNs.

Tax credits are opportunities to reduce financial hardship, support working families, and stimulate local economic activity. By excluding certain groups of lawfully present and taxpaying immigrants, these changes further restrict access to critical tax benefits for mixed-status families and students, reducing financial stability and opportunity for many Rhode Islanders.

Other Federal Actions Impacting Immigrants' Access to State and Federal Programs

The Trump Administration has issued notices through federal agencies that would directly impact millions of immigrants throughout the country. These notices would impose new immigration restrictions on essential benefits and services that are federally funded.¹⁰ For example, under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, programs such as Head Start and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics would restrict eligibility based on immigration status. The U.S. Department of Agriculture would allow states to restrict the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) based on immigration status. Notices through the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor will also make it more difficult for immigrants to access adult education, career and technical education programs, postsecondary learning opportunities, and programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) – which will now mandate verification for work authorization for all participants.

Rhode Island, in a coalition of 21 states, has filed a lawsuit against the federal administration to stop its attempt to restrict access to critical health, education, and social service programs. In September 2025, the coalition won a stopgap measure to block the Trump administration's attempt to gut essential programs.¹¹

The federal government is also requiring states to turn over personal identifying information on all SNAP and Medicaid recipients. Rhode Island has not provided any of the requested personal identifying information to the federal government. Rhode Island has joined a coalition of states in a lawsuit challenging this request by the federal government, and the outcome of that lawsuit is still pending.¹²

H.R.1 Increased Fees for Immigration Applications and Motions

In addition to the drastic changes in eligibility to public benefits for lawfully present immigrants, H.R.1 has increased fees for basic immigration applications and processes.¹³ Several of the fees, particularly for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are completely new, while others have dramatically increased in price. These increases in fees for legal immigration make the process unaffordable for many seeking a better life in America, particularly for those seeking humanitarian protection. Here is a breakdown of some of those increased fees:

USCIS Application	What it covers	Previous fee	H.R.1 Fee	Fee waiver or exemption
Asylum application	Filing an I-589 asylum application	\$0	\$100	No fee waiver
Temporary Protected Status (TPS)	Fee for registering for TPS	\$50	\$550	No fee waiver
Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)	Fee for SIJS Petition for children who are abandoned, abused, or neglected by one or both parents	\$0 (exempt)	\$250	May request fee waiver
Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) Forms or Motions	What it covers	Previous fee	H.R.1 Fee	Fee waiver or exemption
Filing a motion to reopen or reconsider	Fee for any noncitizen who files a motion to reopen or to reconsider a decision of an immigration judge or the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)	\$145 (immigration court) \$110 (BIA)	\$900	May request fee waiver; exception applies if motion is based on an in absentia removal order and there was lack of proper notice
Suspension of Deportation Application	Fee for any noncitizen who files an application for suspension of deportation with an immigration court	\$100 + \$30 biometrics fee	\$600	May request fee waiver

Conclusion

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA or H.R.1) represents one of the most sweeping rollbacks of immigrant access to public benefits in decades, undermining long-standing humanitarian protections and weakening economic and social stability in Rhode Island. By narrowing eligibility for essential programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and key tax credits, H.R.1 excludes thousands of lawfully present and taxpaying residents from supports that sustain families and Rhode Island's local economy. These changes will deepen inequities, reduce economic participation, and strain state systems tasked with managing increased administrative burdens and unmet needs. As Rhode Island continues to uphold its commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity, federal policies like H.R.1 threaten to erode the very foundations of community well-being, economic resilience, and the shared values of fairness and dignity that define the state.

A Quick Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for ACA and Key Federal Means-Tested Programs in Rhode Island

This guide is updated for changes brought forth by H.R.1, many state agencies are awaiting federal guidance to begin implementation. It shows whether an immigrant has an eligible status for affordable health coverage and other programs. Immigrants still need to meet the financial and other requirements of the individual programs. This includes the rules for people who entered the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996.

PROGRAMS	LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS ¹ (age 18 and over)	LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS (under age 18)	LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS (pregnant people)	CUBAN/ HAITIAN ENTRANT and COFA MIGRANTS	REFUGEES, ASYLEES, VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING, and OTHERS ²	LAWFULLY PRESENT INDIVIDUALS ³	UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS (including children) ⁴
If entered the U.S. on or after August 22, 1996:							
Health Source RI (premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions)	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible	No longer eligible (Starting Dec. 31, 2025 for ACA subsidies if under FPL)	Eligible ²	Not eligible
Medicaid (Rlte Care, Rhody Health Partners, etc.)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or military connection ⁵)	Eligible	Eligible	Eligible	No longer eligible (Starting Oct. 2026)	Pregnant people ⁶ and children under 19 are eligible	Pregnant people ⁶ and children under 19 are eligible
Medicare	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or disability or meet age criteria)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or disability)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or disability or meet age criteria)	Eligible	No longer eligible (Starting July 2025 & if already enrolled coverage ends Jan 4, 2027)	Not eligible	Not eligible
SNAP	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period and have credit for 40 quarters of work or military connection)	Eligible	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period and have credit for 40 quarters of work or military connection)	Eligible	No longer eligible (Starting Jan. 2026)	Not eligible	Not eligible
RI Works	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or military connection or receiving disability-related assistance)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or military connection)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period or military connection or receiving disability-related assistance)	Eligible	Eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible
SSI	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period and have credit for 40 quarters of work or have met another exemption)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period and have credit for 40 quarters of work or have met another exemption)	Not eligible (Until after 5-year waiting period and have credit for 40 quarters of work)	Only Eligible during first 7 years after status is granted	Only Eligible during first 7 years after status is granted	Not eligible	Not eligible

¹ Lawful Permanent Residents have a "green card."

² Also includes Amerasian immigrants, Iraqi or Afghan special immigrants and individuals granted withholding of deportation or removal. Certain abused immigrants are also eligible, but have a 5-year waiting period except for RI Works. Iraqi or Afghan special Immigrant status and certain Ukrainian parolees are eligible as follows:

- Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant visa holders (SIV) and special immigrant parolees (who have applied for SIV status) are eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees.
- Other Afghans granted parole between July 31, 2021 and Dec. 16, 2022 - and their spouses and children, and parents/guardians of unaccompanied children granted parole after Sept. 30, 2022 - are also eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees.
- Ukrainians paroled into the US between Feb. 24, 2022 and Sept. 30, 2023 - and their spouses and children, and parents/guardians or primary caregivers of unaccompanied children paroled into the US after Sept. 30, 2021 - are eligible for federal benefits to the same extent as refugees. Benefits are available to this group regardless of the length of their parole period - but only until their parole is terminated.

³ Lawfully present individuals have a status that allows them to live in the U.S., such as temporary protected status, child of a citizen pending adjustment of status.

⁴ As of August 2012, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) grantees, while legally in the U.S., are treated the same as undocumented for purposes of Medicaid, eligibility for HSRI and other public benefit programs.

⁵ Veteran or spouse or child of a veteran or active duty service member.

⁶ Includes 12 months post-partum for people who were enrolled in Medicaid when they gave birth.

Glossary of Terms

- **Adjustment of Status:** The process that an individual can use to apply for lawful permanent resident status (Green Card) when they are present in the United States.
- **Asylee:** An immigrant in the United States (or at a port of entry) who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country, because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.
- **Compact of Free Association (COFA) migrants:** Citizens of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia who are permitted to live and work in the United States under the Compact of Free Association agreements.
- **Cuban or Haitian Entrants:**
 - Cubans who entered without documentation or were paroled into the United States between April 15, 1980, and Oct. 10, 1980, and Haitians who entered without documentation or were paroled into the country before Jan. 1, 1981
 - Cubans and Haitians meeting these criteria who have continuously resided in the United States since before Jan. 1, 1982, and who were known to Immigration before that date may adjust to permanent residence under a provision of the Immigration Control and Reform Act of 1986
- **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):** A policy that provided temporary protection from deportation and work authorization to certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and have grown up in the country.
- **Deferred Enforced Departure (DED):** A presidential action that temporarily protects individuals from removal from the United States for a specific period.
- **Humanitarian parole:** A temporary authorization for individuals to enter the U.S. due to an urgent humanitarian crisis, such as war, disaster, or urgent medical needs.
- **Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN):** A 9-digit number the IRS issues if an individual needs a U.S. taxpayer identification number for federal tax purposes and is not eligible for a Social Security number (SSN).
- **Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR):** Immigrants who have been granted the right to live and work in the United States permanently, commonly known as a "green card" holder.
- **Lawfully present:** Immigrants or noncitizens who have been inspected and admitted into the United States and have not overstayed the period for which they were admitted, or have current permission from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or another federal agency to stay or live in the U.S.
- **Naturalization:** The legal process by which a foreign national voluntarily acquires U.S. citizenship.
- **Nonimmigrant temporary visas:** Allows a foreign national to enter the United States for a specific, limited purpose, such as tourism, study, or temporary work, for a set period.
- **Parolee:** An individual, who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for admission into the United States, who is permitted to live in the U.S. for a temporary period because of urgent humanitarian reasons or for significant public benefit.

- **Social Security Number (SSN):** A unique nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and temporary residents to track workers' earnings and administer benefits. It is widely used by the government and private companies for many purposes, such as paying taxes, opening bank accounts, and applying for loans and driver's licenses.
- **Refugee:** Any person outside their country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.
- **Temporary Protected Status (TPS):** U.S. program that grants temporary legal status to individuals from designated countries facing humanitarian emergencies, protecting them from deportation and allowing them to work lawfully in the United States.
- **Undocumented Immigrant:** An individual without a legal immigration status. They are not provided with work authorizations, and there are few, if any, pathways for them to gain citizenship.

Endnotes

- 1 Migration Policy Institute, “Rhode Island: State Demographics Profile,” updated 2025, [Migration Policy Institute, “Rhode Island: State Demographics Profile,” updated 2025, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/RI](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/RI).
- 2 *ibid*
- 3 Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), FCAG – Second Meeting Deck (August 2025), August 2025, <https://eohhs.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur226/files/2025-08/FCAG-Second-Meeting-Deck-%28August-2025%29.pdf>.
- 4 Children Thrive Action Network, Budget Reconciliation Act of 2025 (Updated July 29, 2025), updated July 29, 2025, https://childrenthriveaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CTAN-Budget-Reconciliation-Act-of-2025_updated7.29.25.pdf.
- 5 Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), FCAG – Second Meeting Deck.
- 6 Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), FCAG – Third Meeting Deck (September 2025), September 2025, <https://eohhs.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur226/files/2025-09/FCAG-Third-Meeting-Deck-%28September-2025%29.pdf>.
- 7 Children Thrive Action Network, 2025.
- 8 Kaiser Family Foundation, “Tracking the Medicaid Provisions in the 2025 Budget Bill,” updated 2025, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/tracking-the-medicaid-provisions-in-the-2025-budget-bill/#:~:text=Limits%20federal%20matching%20payments%20for%20Emergency%20Medicaid>.
- 9 Child Thrive Action Network, 2025.
- 10 National Immigration Law Center (NILC), “What New Federal Notices Mean for Immigrants’ Program Eligibility,” updated 2025, <https://www.nilc.org/articles/what-new-federal-notices-mean-for-immigrants-program-eligibility/>.
- 11 Rhode Island Office of the Attorney General, “Attorney General Neronha, Coalition Secure Preliminary Injunction Preserving Access,” updated 2025, <https://riag.ri.gov/press-releases/attorney-general-neronha-coalition-secure-preliminary-injunction-preserving-access>.
- 12 Rhode Island Office of the Attorney General, “Attorney General Neronha, Coalition Challenge Trump Administration’s Illegal Demands,” updated 2025, <https://riag.ri.gov/press-releases/attorney-general-neronha-coalition-challenge-trump-administrations-illegal-demands>.
- 13 American Immigration Council (AIC), “The Big, Beautiful Bill: Immigration and Border Security,” updated 2025, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/big-beautiful-bill-immigration-border-security/>.