



**ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH
RESOLUTION ON IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC HEALTH RESOURCES**

WHEREAS, in 1948, the World Health Organization recognized health, including access to healthcare, as a fundamental human right^{1,2}; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 130A-1.1. charges local health departments with linking people to needed personal health care services and ensuring the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable³; and

WHEREAS, 12.6% of the Orange County population are foreign-born residents⁴ who share the human right to all public health and personal health care services offered by the Orange County Health Department; and

WHEREAS, on January 21, 2025, Federal Executive Orders abolished national policies that heretofore prevented Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities from entering and conducting arrests in sensitive spaces including healthcare facilities, schools, and places of worship⁵; and

WHEREAS, increased ICE activities have included multiple instances of detaining documented immigrants^{6,7} and U.S. citizens^{8,9,10,11} who were mistakenly believed to be undocumented immigrants, which has created a climate of fear¹²; and

WHEREAS, this climate of fear has negative health consequences such as mental health problems in children and adults who fear deportation and family separation, including feelings of uncertainty, depression, helplessness, worthlessness, shame, and disrupted sleep^{13,14,15,16}. In particular, children, even if they themselves are documented, experience feelings of alienation, isolation, and fear for their future welfare and the safety and security of undocumented family members^{16,17,18,19,20}. These anxieties have been shown to manifest themselves at school through aggression, conduct problems^{13,16}, school avoidance, and poor academic performance, as well as through substance use, withdrawal and isolation behaviors^{15,16,17,18,20}; and

WHEREAS, the threat of an ICE agent in a public health department negatively affects the overall health of the community by creating an atmosphere of fear instead of wellness that may lead to avoidance and delays in seeking care and preventive services^{21,22}; and

WHEREAS, under these circumstances, immigrants are more likely to endure pain and other symptoms of untreated health conditions, to use unregulated medicine from other countries, and to rely on home remedies²³; and

WHEREAS, avoidance and delays in receiving preventive care, including prenatal care and routine childhood vaccinations, can lead to serious negative personal and public health outcomes, such as preterm birth^{24,25}, increased spread of vaccine-preventable diseases²⁶, and children who fall behind on vaccine mandates being excluded from school²⁷; and

WHEREAS, avoidance and delays in receiving needed healthcare can worsen health outcomes and lead to premature death and disability^{28,29,30}, which increase healthcare costs for both individuals and the government³¹. The United States reports a higher chronic disease burden than other developed countries³². North Carolina health departments are mandated to mitigate this burden through provision of ten essential public health services³.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on this 29th of October, 2025, that we, the Orange County Board of Health, advocate for access to health department services for ALL, unburdened by fear of immigration enforcement, arrest, or warrant service on the premises. Access to services at the health department must remain unfettered, safe, and provided to everyone, regardless of political affiliation, immigration status, or any other characteristic. To ensure the health of all, the Orange County Health Department must remain free to serve the public as North Carolina public health law mandates.

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