

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 16, 2024

The Honorable Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Director Jaddou,

Thank you for your service facilitating the process in which future Americans join our nation of immigrants.

We write to request that you reevaluate the current internal policy of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requiring English language translations for any documents that are being submitted to your agency for congressional casework.

We share in the firm belief of the Biden-Harris Administration that we are, at our very core, a nation of immigrants. USCIS is often the very first Federal government agency that immigrants to our country interact with, as well as the one which they associate with their U.S. citizenship.

Every day, Members of Congress and their casework staff reach out to your agency seeking to aid their constituents – inquiring for status updates and requesting expedited processing for citizenship cases, DACA renewals, permanent resident cards, work permits, and so much more.

Unfortunately, USCIS congressional casework policy makes this more difficult by requiring a full English translation for any document submitted to USCIS along with their translator's competency certification. Our limited staff are often forced to spend hours translating constituents' documentation and outreach into English on our constituents' behalf before submitting these materials to your agency.

According to the latest Census data, today, over 20% of Americans speak a language other than English at home. More than half – 13.3% – speak Spanish.

We appreciate the work that has already been done to ease the bureaucratic burden on non-English speaking individuals – including a Spanish-language version of both USCIS.gov and E-Verify.gov where individuals can check their case status – but the current translation requirement creates an undue and unnecessary barrier and casts doubt on our commitment to equity and equal protection.

In 2000, Executive Order 13166 required Federal agencies to examine services they provide and improve access to those services for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Furthermore, around 9% of people in the U.S. – over 25 million – have Limited English Proficiency. In 2019, over 16 million Americans who were considered LEP spoke primarily Spanish.

The services that USCIS provides are critical and often lifechanging. Utilizing the language skills of USCIS officials to translate documents within the agency would improve accuracy, eliminate burdens on constituents, and save congressional staff many hours of translating documents on behalf of constituents.

While we recognize the administrative challenge associated with enacting this change, we firmly believe that it is a necessary and much-needed step. We urge your full and fair consideration of this request and look forward to working with you to make sure that all constituents can receive the help and support they deserve.

Sincerely,



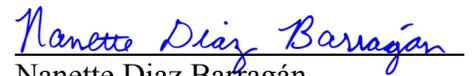
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



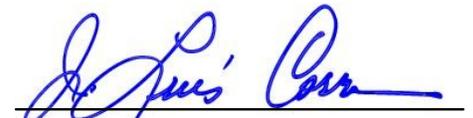
Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



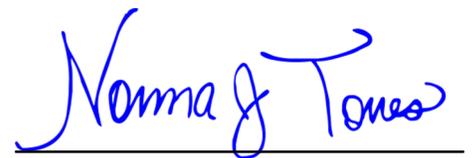
Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



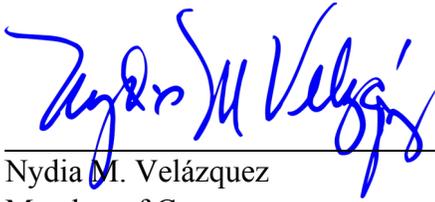
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



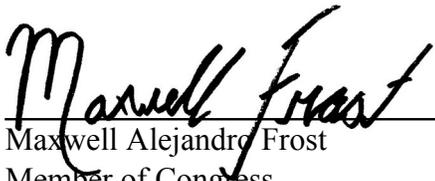
Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



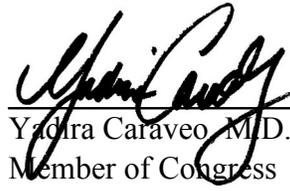
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Yadira Caraveo, M.D.
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

March 19, 2024

The Honorable Robert Garcia
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Garcia:

Thank you for your February 16, 2024 letter to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regarding the agency's policy requiring English translations for documents submitted in support of congressional casework. I share your commitment to reducing any unnecessary burden on non-English speaking individuals and I appreciate your recognition of the efforts USCIS has made to offer information and services in multiple languages.¹

Benefit requestors must establish that they are eligible for the benefit sought, including establishing that their case warrants expedited processing. Generally, benefit requestors establish eligibility through the submission of evidence. When the evidence is a foreign language document, the regulation at 8 CFR 103.2(b)(3) requires the following: "Any document containing foreign language submitted to USCIS shall be accompanied by a full English language translation which the translator has certified as complete and accurate, and by the translator's certification that he or she is competent to translate from the foreign language into English." While I understand the burden this imposes, it is critical for applicants to have the ability to submit a wide range of evidence, regardless of the language it was issued in. Requiring a consistent translation policy with a complete submission in English is equitable across speakers of the many foreign languages encountered by USCIS, and significantly helps USCIS adjudicate benefit requests more expeditiously, efficiently, and accurately.

While 8 CFR 103.2(b)(3) governs the agency's translation requirement policy, we have provided additional guidance to Congressional staff who manage casework and interact with our Congressional liaisons in order to lessen or reduce barriers. *See* <https://www.uscis.gov/congress/congressional-casework/procedures-for-responding-to-congressional-inquiries>. That guidance states – with respect to the qualifications of the translator providing the required certified translation -- that "anyone (paid or unpaid, including congressional staffers or family members) can provide a translation as long as they certify under

¹ *See* USCIS' Language Access Plan, available online at <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/uscis-updated-language-access-plan-2020.pdf>, which establishes goals and guidelines to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals have meaningful access to our services and information

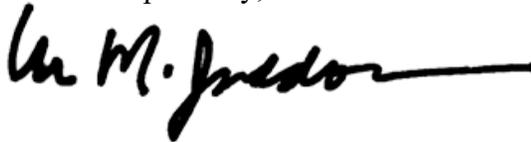
The Honorable Robert Garcia

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penalty of perjury or similar language (e.g., 'to the best of my knowledge') that they are competent to translate from the foreign language into English."

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, or if your staff would like to further discuss our congressional inquiry processes and requirements and areas for improvement, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director