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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0914

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2052 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:
4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817
www.castor.house.gov

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Requesting an Update from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on Current Green Card Processing Backlog

Dear Mrs. Jaddou,

The COVID-19 crisis has forced employers to rethink how we get work done while keeping staff safe and healthy. I know that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has faced those same challenges, but I am concerned about the growing backlog of requests from my constituents for resident card and work permits application processing, further delaying the excess of claims and appeals pending review. It is our duty to help people who have and want to continue making remarkable contributions to our community through hard work, perseverance and love for our country, so I stand ready to work with you to get this done quickly.

It is my understanding that USCIS had an opportunity to chip away at that backlog, after coronavirus-related processing delays in 2020 led to an additional 122,000 employment-based resident cards this year, but the additional resident cards, had they been processed in time, could have shortened the wait for many other immigrants, some who have waited more than a decade for a resident card. In addition to a substantial backlog of requests, my casework team receives delayed responses from a Congressional Liaison at USCIS for answers on processing times that could take months or years to fully address, even with USCIS at full operating capacity. These excessive delays are unacceptable and negatively impacting the lives of my constituents. What is USCIS's plan to address this growing backlog, and how can the Congress help provide world-class service to lawful immigrants and their families?

We are all concerned about the growing Delta variant surge and keeping USCIS employees safe, but I trust that there is a way to protect employees while efficiently processing records of the benefits many immigrants need, to keep their jobs and provide for their families. My team and I stand ready to work with you. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me, my casework team and District Director, Marcia Mejia at Marcia.Mejia@mail.house.gov or 813.871.2817.

Sincerely,


Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 14



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

January 6, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Castor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Castor:

Thank you for your October 12, 2021 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

USCIS has taken proactive steps to maximize visa usage in spite of numerous operational challenges caused directly and indirectly by COVID-19. In FY 2021, USCIS processed and approved more than 177,000 employment-based adjustment of status applications, an increase of over 60 percent above our typical load of 110,000. We approved more employment-based adjustment of status applications in FY 2021 than we have since FY 2005. We have also prioritized employment-based adjustment of status applications during every step of processing and adjudication during this fiscal year. We continue to make processing and resource allocation decisions to increase the pace of adjudications and limit the potential for employment-based visa numbers to go unused. USCIS is well-situated to process an even higher number of adjustment of status applications in FY 2022.

Normally, unused visas constitute less than one percent of the total allotment as Department of State and USCIS closely coordinate to use as close to the exact number available. As COVID-19 shuttered in-person services for the second half of fiscal year 2020, thousands of intending immigrants were unable to complete their visa processing overseas. While it became evident in the spring and summer of 2020 that there would be an excessive supply of available employment-based visas in fiscal year 2021, a sharp drop in receipts early in the pandemic caused severe financial strain on the primarily fee-funded USCIS. This in turn caused a months-long hiring pause and operating on an austerity budget that significantly hampered efforts to prepare for additional employment-based visa availability in fiscal year 2021.

To mitigate these impacts, USCIS has employed biometrics reuse where possible and prioritized scheduling for employment-based adjustment of status applicants. We have also proactively contacted applicants to submit the Form I-693, Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record, which are often not included with the adjustment application. We encourage everyone to file Form I-693 together with Form I-485, as doing so may eliminate the need to issue a Request for Evidence and may help avoid adjudication delays. In addition, from

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August 12 through September 30, 2021, USCIS temporarily extended the validity period for Form I-693 from two years to now four years due to COVID-19-related delays in processing. To further streamline processing, USCIS also announced on December 9, 2021 that it would temporarily waive the requirement that the civil surgeon's signature on Form I-693 be dated no more than 60 days before the applicant files the application for the underlying immigration benefit.

In addition, we have launched an agency-wide effort to use all available policy and operational improvements to reduce both the number of pending cases and processing times across the board, to ensure that Green Cards and other immigration benefits are provided to those who are eligible, while disrupting fraud, detecting national security risks, and ensuring the integrity of the world's largest immigration system.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, 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 horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director