

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 11, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
300 7th St. SW
Washington, DC 20024

RECEIVED
By ESEC at 8:41 am, Sep 12, 2023

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

As co-chairs of the Congressional Soccer Caucus, we are committed to the continued growth of the world's most popular sport, soccer, in the United States and the many benefits the sport has on our children and communities. With the number of Americans calling themselves soccer fans at an all-time high, the United States should review current policies that may support or limit access to visa applications needed for the sport's continued growth.

Despite Congress's intent when it unanimously expanded the P-1 visa category to include minor league athletes almost 20 years ago, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to significantly limit the admission of international soccer players recruited to play in the United States. DHS is denying P-1 visas to players recruited by teams in the Major Arena Soccer League (MASL), which is counter to congressional intent.

The Major Arena Soccer League (MASL) — formerly Major Indoor Soccer League (MISL), which was founded in 1977 and averaged 7,644 fans per game over its fourteen regular seasons — continues to touch all corners of the United States and the international community. With 12 franchises across the United States and two in Mexico, the MASL is the premier international league for indoor soccer. During the COVID-19 pandemic when only the major U.S. professional sports leagues received exemptions and were able to “return to play,” the MASL was deemed such and permitted to play live games in the same limited capacity as the MLS, NFL, NHL, and NBA.

Currently, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has determined the MASL is not a major U.S. sports league because six or more teams cannot show total combined revenues that exceed \$10 million per year. However, this assertion is based upon an audit performed immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic and the MASL is presently in negotiations to acquire national broadcasting rights to games and enable the league to continue operating in excess of the \$10 million per year threshold.

Arena soccer has a critical role in the broader United States soccer ecosystem. Arena soccer teams are involved with their communities, often conducting youth engagement, running soccer camps, and building awareness and skill in the sport. Professional arena soccer players also often move onward into Major League Soccer. As the United States prepares to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the popularity of soccer in smaller communities through arena soccer is critical to building the momentum and excitement for a successful tournament.

The persistent challenges with P-1 visas for athletes recruited by MASL teams has put U.S. teams at a disadvantage. We encourage DHS and USCIS to review the approach toward the MASL and develop a review process whereby MASL is permitted to recruit players under the P-1 visa program moving forward, pursuant with the intent of the underlying statute.

When Congress passed the COMPETE Act in 2006 (P.L. 109-463), the purpose was to allow minor league professional athletes to utilize the P-1 visa category, which up to that time had been reserved only for major league professional athletes. In the spirit of this specific congressional intent to ensure sports leagues can recruit the most talented individuals from around the world, the Department's continued denial of soccer players recruited to come to the United States to play in the MASL should be reviewed and reconsidered within all relevant rules and regulations. Thank you for your consideration.

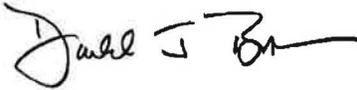
Sincerely,



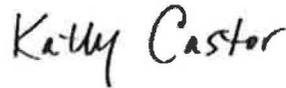
Darin LaHood
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



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

October 12, 2023

The Honorable Darin LaHood
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative LaHood:

Thank you for your September 11, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) appreciates your interest in the P-1A nonimmigrant classification. We share your desire to ensure all P-1A petitions are adjudicated consistent with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Due to ongoing litigation, USCIS cannot comment about adjudications pertaining to P-1A petitions involving the Major Arena Soccer League at this time.

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, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director