

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 15, 2022

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas  
Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20528-0525

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

Before the Trump Administration's misguided changes to processing policies and the closure of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices due to COVID-19, visa renewals could be completed with diligence and effectiveness. While we are grateful for the immediate extension of eligible H-4 and L-2 visa applications, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the processing and Congressional response times at some USCIS service centers.

Over at least the last three months, our Congressional Offices have struggled to receive responses from the Nebraska Service Center (NSC). Many district caseworkers are waiting over 60 days without a response from federal liaisons, while others are being told that the average response time to their congressional inquiries for expedited visa requests exceeds 60 days. This is disheartening because when expedited visa requests are not processed in a timely manner, it can lead to dire situations for an immigrant and their family, potentially causing job loss, homelessness, financial losses to American businesses, and extreme anxiety for the immigrant and their family.

Though we understand that the pandemic has generally lengthened the response time, the other four service centers are generally answering congressional requests in a timely and efficient manner. These lengthened times are discouraging to our constituents who consider their Congressional Offices as their best point of contact for assistance with federal agencies' issues.

Many Congressional Offices and their caseworkers are being asked to consider the high volume of inquiries that the NSC is receiving and the limited resources they are expected to use to provide assistance. When necessary, we know that USCIS has transferred cases between the five service centers to balance the workload and promote timely processing. The last time USCIS transferred cases was back in October of 2020. In order to maintain the trust and efficient communication between caseworkers and federal agencies, is it possible to transfer some of the cases from the Nebraska Service Center to another center? If an internal transfer of cases is not possible, please let us know what resources are necessary from Congress to reduce processing time and the equal distribution of caseloads among USCIS staff.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



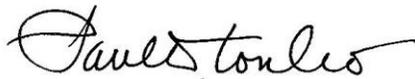
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Deborah Ross  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Haley Stevens  
Member of Congress

Cynthia Axne  
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

Donald Payne Jr.  
Member of Congress

Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress

Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress

Ed Case  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress

Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/ André Carson  
Member of Congress

David Price  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Jason Crow  
Member of Congress

Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



Marie Newman  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



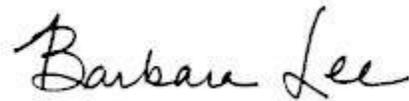
Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress



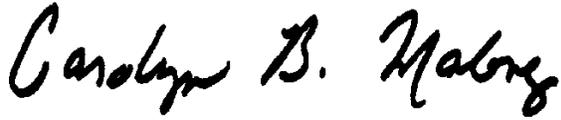
Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Kathy Manning  
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress

CC: Ur Mendoza Jaddou, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



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

March 23, 2022

The Honorable Al Lawson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lawson:

Thank you for your February 15, 2022, letter regarding delayed responses to congressional inquiries to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), specifically those responses from the USCIS Nebraska Service Center. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

USCIS understands the importance of providing information in a timely manner to Members of Congress and their staff, and I am committed to improving our ability to do so despite our growing workload. As you are aware, USCIS processing times for applications and petitions, as well as responses to congressional inquiries, are longer than desired. USCIS recognizes the anxiety and hardships that delays may cause, and that is why tackling our backlogs and creating efficiencies is a priority for me.

As you note, the pandemic has presented challenges that have lengthened USCIS response times. In addition, USCIS is on pace to receive nearly 150,000 congressional inquiries this fiscal year, which would be nearly a 20 percent increase from previous years. For much of the pandemic, USCIS operated under a hiring freeze, thus limiting resources available to operations and congressional units. Nevertheless, USCIS is taking steps to mitigate the impact of these factors on backlogged adjudications and improve response times for congressional inquiries. To that end, we have:

- Lifted the hiring freeze and imposed an aggressive schedule to hire and train staff;
- Authorized overtime to focus on those lines of business that are backlogged; and
- Begun to digitize more workloads to increase efficiency and better align workloads with our workforce.

I am deeply thankful for congressional support, including your efforts to provide funds that are critical to the backlog reduction effort. We also appreciate the suggestions in your letter to improve response times, and our leadership team is taking them into consideration.

On December 6, 2021, USCIS notified congressional staff of the increase in inquiries and the likelihood of delays in responses, and provided some tips for congressional staff that can help alleviate the delays. USCIS sent this notice via GovDelivery. If your staff is not yet on the GovDelivery mailing list, they may subscribe by sending a request to [usciscongressionalinquiries@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:usciscongressionalinquiries@uscis.dhs.gov).

Recognizing the interest in this matter, USCIS held a briefing for congressional staff on March 3, 2022. During that call, service center staff and members of the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs provided updates on adjudicative and congressional response backlogs, as well as measures that USCIS is taking to reduce them. We will continue to find mechanisms to update congressional staff on our progress and continued challenges we are facing as we seek to reduce our backlogs and promote efficiencies as well as improve the experience of the individuals we serve.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this 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, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director