

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 18, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 3:05 pm, Mar 18, 2022

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to you regarding a March 15, 2022, press release outlining U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plans to partially reopen certain domestic offices and resume in-person, non-emergency public services on or after June 4th. As part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), your agency plays a critical role in the immigration system, including adjudicating green cards, issuing temporary nonimmigrant worker visas, and holding naturalization ceremonies. Given the growing backlog of immigration benefits and imminent conclusion of the public health emergency, however, we urge you to consider an immediate re-opening of all offices and full staffing for in-person services.

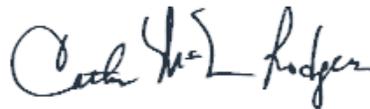
According to recent reports, the processing backlog for immigration benefits has surpassed eight million, and U.S. employment authorization backlogs have reached nearly 1.5 million documents. Given the current labor shortage, we find these delays to be untimely and readily fixable. USCIS delays are causing economic harm at the micro- and macroeconomic level, lack transparency, and hurt hardworking families. The COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency is ending, it is time we return to normalcy and address more pressing problems. Delaying a return to in-person work and partially re-opening offices marginally impacts the ability to reduce the current backlog, while having negligible impact on the public health.

As you know, DHS has a responsibility to protect and serve our nation's immigration policies. The failure to reduce mounting backlogs amid a growing workforce shortage at the end of a public health emergency has severe short and long-term repercussions. It is long overdue that USCIS offices fully reopen with available staff to reduce backlogs and begin fulfilling the mission that it is tasked to complete.

Sincerely,



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Brian J. Mast
Member of Congress



Ralph Norman
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



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

May 10, 2022

The Honorable David Schweikert
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schweikert:

Thank you for your March 18, 2022 letter concerning the status of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

Please know that USCIS offices are fully open for business and have been since June 4, 2020. On March 15, 2022, a systems error resulted in the reissuance of a press release from May 2020 announcing a partial reopening. This, however, is not the case, and all USCIS offices are fully operational and open for business. We regret the confusion this unfortunate mistake has caused.

Addressing the USCIS backlog is a priority for our agency, as are measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of our employees and those we serve. On March 29, 2022, USCIS announced a trio of efforts to increase efficiency and reduce burdens to the overall legal immigration system. USCIS set new agency-wide backlog reduction goals, expanded premium processing to additional form types, and announced efforts to improve timely access to employment authorization documents. These measures uphold our responsibility to protect and support our nation's immigration policies and laws and brings USCIS closer to meeting its mission to uphold America's promise as a nation of welcome and possibility with fairness, integrity, and respect for all we serve. To continue our progress, the FY 2023 budget requests \$255.9 million for continued backlog reduction efforts to fund dedicated staff and technology improvements that will have a direct impact on USCIS' multiyear effort to eliminate the backlog. Additionally, USCIS requests \$375 million and over 2,000 positions for asylum processing which will increase capacity to conduct screening interviews at the Southwest Border and address the affirmative asylum backlog.

The Honorable David Schweikert

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Thank you again for your letter. 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 long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director