

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2022

Director Ur M. Jaddou  
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Director Jaddou:

We write to inquire about the steps that United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is taking to address delays in green card, visa, and work permit application processing so the United States can continue to recruit top talent during a time of workforce shortages.

Across the country, businesses are having a hard time finding enough workers to get the job done. Current estimates indicate that the United States has around 11.3 million job openings,<sup>1</sup> and demand for labor far exceeds the supply of available U.S. workers at this time.<sup>2</sup> With so many job openings, American businesses are looking to hire skilled workers through our employment-based immigrant and non-immigrant visa programs.

In recent years, however, the path to legally immigrating to the United States has become a rocky one filled with waitlists and backlogs that too often keep the world's talent waiting in limbo or away entirely. Currently, about nine million prospective immigrants are awaiting green cards, and, for applicants from some countries, the wait will be years-long.<sup>3</sup> In fiscal year 2021, processing delays were partly responsible for the evaporation of roughly 80,000 employment-based green cards.<sup>4</sup> These delays and backlogs cause tremendous harm not only to prospective immigrants and their families who are left living in uncertainty, but also to companies that are waiting to hire them and the communities that are waiting to benefit from their talents.

At a recent hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee, former USCIS Chief Counsel Lynden Melmed testified that some delays in visa processing were attributable to the lack of options for

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<sup>1</sup> News Release, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary (Mar. 29, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.nr0.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> See Howard Schneider, *Record U.S. Quits, Hiring Slowdown May Show Omicron's Impact on Labor Supply*, Reuters (Jan. 4, 2022), <https://www.reuters.com/markets/us/record-quits-hiring-slowdown-may-show-omicrons-impact-us-labor-supply-2022-01-04/>.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Bier, *Family and Employment Green Card Backlog Exceeds 9 Million*, Cato Institute (Sept. 29, 2021), <https://www.cato.org/blog/family-employment-green-card-backlog-exceeds-9-million>.

<sup>4</sup> *80,000 Green Cards Are About to Disappear From the U.S.*, Washington Post (Oct. 14, 2021), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/80000-green-cards-are-about-to-disappear-from-the-us/2021/10/14/74c096fc-2cef-11ec-b17d-985c186de338\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/80000-green-cards-are-about-to-disappear-from-the-us/2021/10/14/74c096fc-2cef-11ec-b17d-985c186de338_story.html).

electronic filing.<sup>5</sup> Given the workforce shortages faced by communities across the country, we are interested in making sure that USCIS has the resources it needs to cut down on these backlogs and to issue the immigrant visas that Congress has made available.

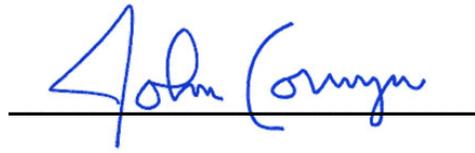
Accordingly, we ask that you answer the following questions by April 25, 2022:

1. Do you agree that processing paper applications causes delays in the agency's processing of applications that contribute to backlogs and long waits?
2. What options currently exist for applicants to file immigration forms electronically? What plans does the agency have to expand electronic filing?
3. Some programs currently allow applicants to file applications entirely or partially online, while others require an entirely paper application. How has USCIS determined which processes to make electronic, and which to keep as paper applications?
4. In May of 2019, USCIS announced a new strategy called eProcessing to transition to a digital immigration processing system.<sup>6</sup> What steps has the agency taken to implement eProcessing, and what effect, if any, has there been on backlogs as a result of that program?
5. What support can Congress provide to facilitate processing generally and the move toward electronic application processing specifically?

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senator



John Cornyn  
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
U.S. Senator



Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senator

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<sup>5</sup> *Removing Barriers to Legal Migration to Strengthen our Communities and Economy Before the Subcomm. on Immigration, Citizenship and Border Safety*, 117th Cong. (2022) (written statement of Lynden D. Melmed, Former Chief Counsel, USCIS; Partner, Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Melmed%20Testimony.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Press release, USCIS, USCIS Accelerates Transition to Digital Immigration Processing (May 22, 2019),

<https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/uscis-accelerates-transition-to-digital-immigration-processing>.