

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 22, 2022

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

Dear Director Jaddou:

We are writing to inquire about steps that United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is taking to address delays in employment authorization document (EAD) processing. Constituents have reported that delays in the processing of EADs have kept them from being able to work—in some cases, for as long as nine months.

Over the past year, tens of thousands of refugees have fled to the United States to escape war, violence, and political turmoil.¹ In the last year, the United States has welcomed more than 80,000 Afghans.² As of July, more than 100,000 Ukrainians arrived in the United States, and more are expected to arrive in the coming months.³

Unfortunately, arriving refugees have too often faced months-long waits for an EAD.⁴ As of July, thousands of refugees who arrived in the United States in April were still waiting to receive work authorization.⁵ Some have been warned that it could take more than a year for them to receive work authorization.⁶

These delays aren't just devastating to refugees who are eager to provide for themselves and their families, they're also a barrier to enriching their new communities with their skills and talents. This is all the more frustrating as businesses across the country continue to struggle to find the workers they need to operate.⁷

¹ Steve Inskeep, *U.S. Helps Refugees, such as Afghans and Ukrainians, Settle in the U.S.*, NPR (Apr. 14, 2022, 5:06 AM ET), <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/14/1092785351/welcome-us-helps-refugees-such-as-afghans-and-ukrainians-settle-in-the-u-s>.

² *Tens of thousands of Afghans have resettled across the U.S. Now, the challenge is making a home*, PBS NEWS HOUR (Feb. 3, 2022, 5:24 PM ET), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/tens-of-thousands-of-afghans-have-resettled-across-the-u-s-now-the-challenge-is-making-a-home>

³ Camilo Montoya-Galvez, *U.S. Admits 100,000 Ukrainians in 5 Months, Fulfilling Biden Pledge*, CBS NEWS (July 29, 2022, 6:26 PM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-admits-100000-ukrainians-in-5-months-fulfilling-biden-pledge>.

⁴ Jay Kim, *Many Ukrainian Refugees in Sacramento Are Still Without a Work Permit*, ABC 10 (July 9, 2022, 5:24 PM PDT), <https://www.abc10.com/article/news/local/sacramento/many-ukrainian-refugees-in-sacramento-are-still-without-a-work-permit/103-f448fe4b-f821-401b-b2d7-55e62901794d>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Scott Cohn, *Worker Shortages, Supply Chain Crisis Fuel 2022 Top States for Business Battle*, CNBC (June 27, 2022, 9:04 AM EDT), <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/13/worker-shortage-supply-chain-crisis-fuel-2022-top-states-for-business.html>.

We appreciate the administration's work to restore our country's leadership in providing refuge for people in need, including by increasing the refugee admissions cap to 125,000. We also appreciate the steps that the administration has taken to extend work authorization for those renewing their permits⁸ and to streamline work-authorization processing for Afghan evacuees.⁹

As those fleeing war and violence continue to seek refuge in the United States, it is important that USCIS has the resources it needs to reduce backlogs and issue timely work authorizations so that refugees have the authorization they need to provide for their families.

Accordingly, we ask that you answer the follow questions by August 29, 2022:

1. What challenges or constraints has the Department faced in completing its review of EADs?
2. What steps has the department taken, and what steps does it plan to take, to decrease EAD processing times?
3. What support can Congress provide to facilitate EAD processing generally and the processing of work permits for those admitted on humanitarian parole status specifically?
4. What steps has USCIS taken to ensure that it has the capacity to handle an increase in EAD requests following the administration's decision to raise the refugee admissions cap to 125,000?
5. Has the Department considered how expanded electronic processing could increase processing times for EADs? What steps, if any, has the Department taken to increase online processing of EADs?
6. Fee waivers for EAD applications cannot be filed online even though many refugees and parolees applying for EADs must rely on such fee waivers.¹⁰ Has the Department considered allowing individuals to file fee waivers online? If not, why not? What barriers exist to allow fee waivers to be submitted online?

⁸ *USCIS Increases Automatic Extension Period of Work Permits for Certain Applicants*, U.S. CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGR. SERVS. (May 3, 2022), <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/uscis-increases-automatic-extension-period-of-work-permits-for-certain-applicants>.

⁹ *DHS Announces Fee Exemptions, Streamlined Processing for Afghan Nationals as They Resettle in the U.S.*, U.S. DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC. (Nov. 8, 2021), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/11/08/dhs-announces-fee-exemptions-streamlined-processing-afghan-nationals-they-resettle>.

¹⁰ *I-912, Request for Fee Waiver*, U.S. CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGR. SERVS. (May 10, 2022), <https://www.uscis.gov/i-912>.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator