

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2019

The Honorable L. Francis Cissna
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20529

Dear Director Cissna:

We write to you to express concern about reports of long processing delays at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) experienced by our constituents and constituents' employers. In 2002, Congress created USCIS to be a service-oriented, immigration service agency with the mission to adjudicate immigration matters to enable individuals to obtain work authorization, citizenship, humanitarian protection, and other important services. As such, USCIS is charged with efficiently and effectively administering the American legal immigration system.

However, a recent study by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) suggests that there are significant processing delays associated with applications for initial and renewed employment authorization. These delays form part of a nationwide slowdown that impacts a broad range of application and petition form types, including family-based case delays as well as humanitarian case delays.

The delays in employment authorization applications have led to disruptions in American businesses, many of which depend on employees who need work authorization to carry out their functions. When an employee experiences an unexpected processing delay in applying for and renewing employment authorization it can destabilize a business and leave mission-critical roles unfilled. During your confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee on May 24, 2017, you pledged that, if confirmed, you would "strive to ensure that the agency carries out its mission in a fair, lawful, efficient, and expeditious manner." American businesses urgently need USCIS to fulfill this mission.

We, therefore, ask that you respond to this letter by indicating when your office can provide a staff briefing regarding these processing delays. Both in writing and during our discussion at the staff briefing, we ask that you respond to the following:

1. What are the causes of the administrative delays in processing applications and petitions generally, as well as employment authorizations specifically? Please provide analysis

concerning the extent to which agency policies and practices are contributing to these delays.

2. How has USCIS responded to the delays in processing applications and petitions generally, as well as employment authorization applications specifically? What is the agency's plan for reducing and ultimately eliminating case processing delays while ensuring fair, high-quality adjudications?
3. What efforts can be taken to expedite administrative processing of applications for employment authorization?
4. Does your agency need specific congressional appropriations to upgrade any legacy systems which may be contributing to delays? Please provide a breakdown of how your agency is allocating existing funding across different agency operations, activities, and initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



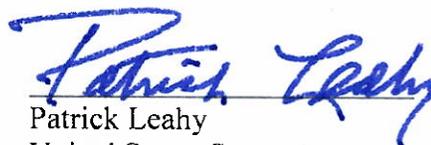
John Thune
United States Senator



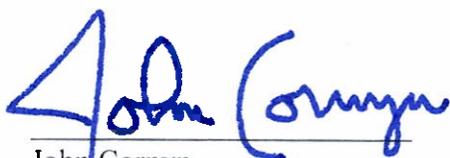
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



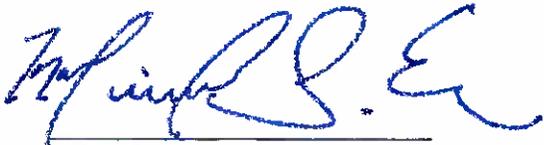
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



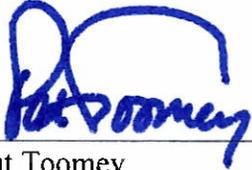
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



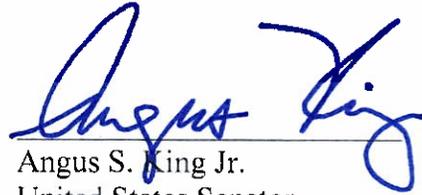
Mike Lee
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



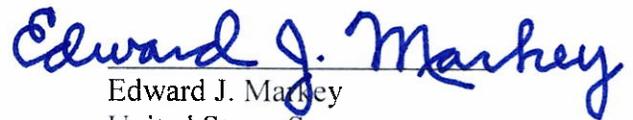
Pat Toomey
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



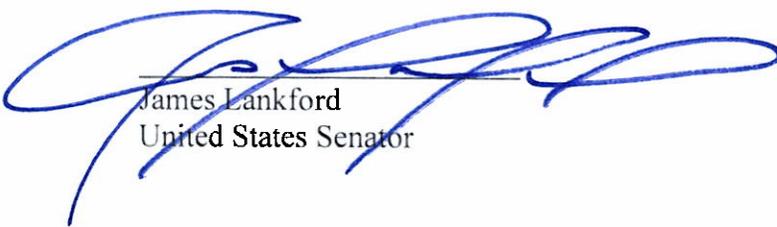
Edward J. Markey
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Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



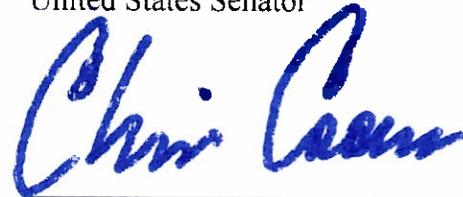
James Lankford
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



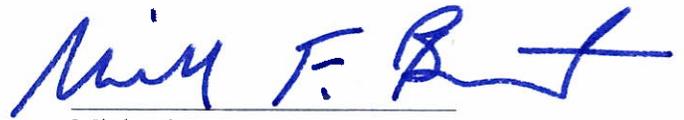
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



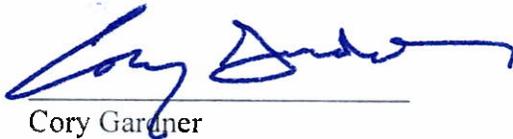
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Martha McSally
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



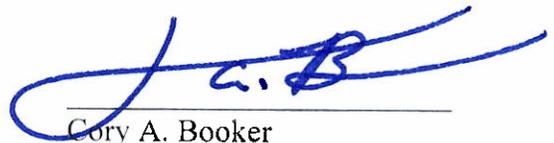
Cory Gardner
United States Senator



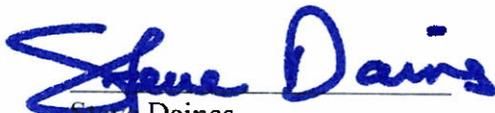
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



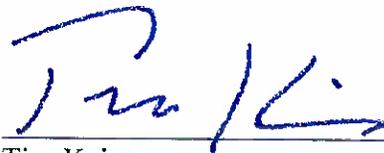
Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator



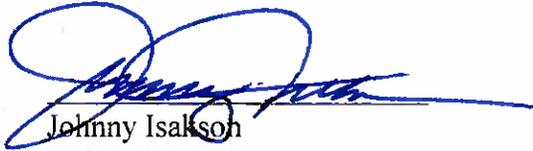
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator



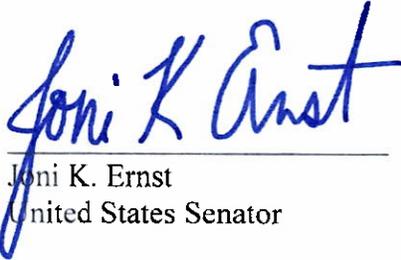
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



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United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator