



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 21, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Joseph Edlow
Deputy Director for Policy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Wolf and Mr. Edlow:

We write to request that you postpone the planned furloughing of over 13,000 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) employees.

We are aware that USCIS is facing a significant budgetary shortfall. Various policy changes that restrict legal immigration and the decline in processing due to the COVID-19 pandemic together contributed to the current budgetary crisis. When this situation was first brought to Congress' attention on May 15, 2020, USCIS estimated that it would be unable to make payroll within a matter of months and would have to take drastic action to avoid financial collapse. Subsequently, USCIS argued that without over \$1.2 billion in emergency funding it would be forced to furlough 13,400 employees—approximately 70 percent of its workforce—on August 3, 2020. On July 24, 2020, furloughs were postponed until August 30, 2020.

However, we understand that a recent re-evaluation of USCIS' carryover indicates that it has adequate resources to continue operations through the end of the fiscal year. If the furloughs go into effect as announced on August 30, they will cripple operations and cause significant hardship for thousands of dedicated employees and their families.

Instead, the decision you made at the end of July to postpone furloughs was correct as Congress is still actively working on a solution. As you are well aware, Congress and USCIS spent much of the summer collaborating on developing a plan to address the current budget shortfall and prevent future ones. To implement furloughs now could undermine ongoing efforts and cause severe, possibly irreparable, harm to USCIS.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that USCIS can continue operating and its employees continue to receive paychecks. While this process moves forward, it is vital that our legal immigration system continues to function at full capacity. As our nation struggles with the COVID-19 pandemic, the services that USCIS provides are critical and must be maintained. Struggling businesses are relying on temporary workers, overburdened hospitals are depending on medical professionals, and USCIS is the essential component that makes this activity possible.

We ask that in the interest of your employees and our nation as a whole, you make the reasonable and important decision to postpone the implementation of furloughs through the end of the fiscal year.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



Kathleen Rice
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Border Security,
Facilitation, & Operations