



January 13, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

RECEIVED

By ESEC at 12:26 pm, Jun 30, 2023

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you as leaders of Catholic dioceses receiving an influx of asylum seekers and other migrants from the southwest border. We wish to express our gratitude for the positive steps your administration has taken regarding immigration to alleviate some of the challenges faced by our undocumented brothers and sisters. Among these are recent Temporary Protected Status designations and re-designations, which provide a modicum of relief to those in need and afford them with critical employment authorization. However, we remain very concerned about the plight of those who have recently arrived on a disproportionate basis to our communities, especially with so many unable to work lawfully to support themselves and their families. Besides housing, this is one of the great challenges identified by our social services ministries providing welcome and integration services to new arrivals.

We urge your administration to do everything possible to help these newcomers receive employment authorization in a timely manner. We understand that this is a very challenging and complex situation, and Congress may have a role to play in some cases. However, we ask you to consider all available options to provide this basic right, similar to the commendable measures being taken by your administration to provide work authorization for Afghans and Ukrainians. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. We strongly believe that the dignity of a person is best lived out in society when he or she is given the means for self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, our country faces a severe shortage of workers, and these newcomers are eager to address that need, which impacts everything from inflation and food security, to infrastructure and health care.

We look forward to seeing what actions your administration takes in the coming days and weeks to help those living on the existential peripheries, especially those who are newly arrived and lack the ability to work. If needed, we encourage you to work with Congress to make appropriate changes through legislation to increase access to work authorization. We remain committed to working with you and your staff to address these concerns.

Sincerely,

His Eminence Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago

His Eminence Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York

Archbishop of Philadelphia



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

August 1, 2023

His Eminence Blase J. Cupich
Archbishop of Chicago
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2030

Your Eminence:

Thank you for your January 13, 2023 letter to President Biden. I am responding on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security. Your letter urges the Biden Administration to do everything possible to help asylum seekers and other migrants arriving at the southwest border obtain employment authorization.

Certain foreign nationals who are in the United States may file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, to request employment authorization and an Employment Authorization Document (EAD), while other foreign nationals are authorized to work in the United States incident to status. Form I-765 lists out the available eligibility categories for employment authorization. In regard to asylum seekers, on January 23, 2023, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that certain asylum applicants can now file Form I-765 online. Accordingly, certain EAD applicants under the category (c)(8), Pending Asylum and Withholding of Removal Applicants, will thus benefit from a more efficient, secure, and convenient process that also increases operational efficiencies for USCIS.

USCIS is committed to improving processing times and reducing backlogs in adjudicating applications for EADs. To that end, USCIS remains committed to hiring and training additional officers to adjudicate EAD requests from noncitizens with pending asylum applications. Since these efforts began, USCIS has increased the number of EAD adjudications. For example, USCIS adjudicated approximately 93,800 EAD applications filed by asylum seekers in June 2023. The majority of these applications (88 percent) were completed within 30 days of filing. At the end of June, approximately 52,000 such EAD applications were pending, of which 86 percent were pending 30 days or fewer. This is despite sharp increases in incoming receipts in the past year. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 through June, USCIS has received an average of 63,000 such EAD applications per month compared to FY 2017-FY 2022 when USCIS averaged 20,000 monthly receipts.

Section 208(d)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act states that no employment authorization shall be issued to an asylum applicant prior to the expiration of the 180-day period

His Eminence Blase J. Cupich

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after the date of filing the asylum application. Therefore, only Congress can reduce the 180-day EAD eligibility period for those who file an asylum application. We are committed to exploring all available avenues to eliminate unnecessary barriers, restore faith in the immigration system, and improve transparency, efficiency, and customer experience.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the cosigners of your letter. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director