



HELLIE PINGREE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
1ST DISTRICT, MAINE

February 15, 2023

Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Director Jaddou,

I am writing to you today to express concerns regarding the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking titled "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements¹" to increase immigration benefit fees. Specifically, I am concerned about the impact that the proposed increases for O and P visas could have on the creative sector, particularly for arts entities and the communities they serve.

Arts and cultural organizations, artists, venues, and the wider creative sector are vital to countless local economies in Maine and across the U.S. Despite vast contributions to their communities, most arts entities operate on very limited budgets. As the creative sector works to recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued high costs, delays, and unpredictability in visa processing has contributed to a difficult economic recovery. The broader economic implications for the sector are significant; despite the challenges of the pandemic, the arts and culture sector contributed \$876.7 billion to the gross domestic product in 2020².

As you know, the proposed rule would increase petition fees for O visas from \$460 to \$1,655 and for P visas from \$460 to \$1,615 per request. I have serious concerns that fee increases of this magnitude could prove insurmountable for local arts organizations and businesses in my district and around the country, and may make it impossible for many of them to engage international artists at all. Additionally, ongoing processing delays have forced many petitioners to pay the additional premium processing fee of \$2,500 per visa petition in order to receive a visa in time for events, further compounding these costs.

Many arts entities are concerned that their ability to afford these fees has been significantly overestimated in this proposed rule and are alarmed at the prospect of visa fees more than tripling in size. I strongly encourage USCIS to reconsider these dramatic fee increases for O and P visas, and to consider the unique economic needs of local arts venues, nonprofits, and businesses still recovering from the impact of the pandemic.

¹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/04/2022-27066/us-citizenship-and-immigration-services-fee-schedule-and-changes-to-certain-other-immigration>

² <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020>

Additionally, I urge USCIS to work with the Departments of Homeland Security and State to arrange a stakeholder meeting with representatives from across the arts sector as soon as possible to hear their concerns about other policies affecting their industry, and discuss ways in which the administration can work with the arts sector toward solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and please reach out to Erin Schnell in my office at Erin.Schnell@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-6116 with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chellie Pingree". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



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

September 8, 2023

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pingree:

Thank you for your February 15, 2023 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regarding proposed fee increases for O and P visas.

We appreciate your statements about the cultural and economic importance of artists and arts organizations and your concerns about the impact of USCIS fees on these stakeholders.

USCIS' fee structures are set to ensure we fully recover all of the agency's operational costs and meet projected demands for services. As you know, USCIS is primarily fee funded with 96% of our budget covered by fees. At the same time, USCIS administers certain immigration benefits without collecting a fee (e.g., refugee and asylum processing, and fee exemptions or waivers for humanitarian-based immigration benefit requests). To cover the costs of doing this important work to support the nation's ideals, USCIS must charge other fee-paying applicants and petitioners. As USCIS' humanitarian mission continues to grow, Congressional support is crucial to ensuring we can carry out that mission without negatively impacting our other work or our fiscal sustainability.

Your input regarding O and P visa fees in the proposed fee rule is very important to us. In terms of engagement efforts, DHS held virtual public listening sessions in January during which the public spoke directly to USCIS on the questions raised by the proposed rule. The public comment period ended on March 13, 2023, and USCIS is carefully reviewing all public comments as we draft a final fee rule.

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
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Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

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

Ur M. Jaddou
Director