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**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



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

September 17, 2020

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson:

Thank you for your August 21, 2020 letter requesting to delay the furloughs of 13,000 staff at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Acting Secretary Wolf asked that I respond on his behalf.

As you are aware, USCIS has cancelled the administration furlough that was scheduled to begin on August 30, 2020. We made this decision based on aggressive and unprecedented spending cuts, our most recent financial projections, and in consultation with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's and my financial staff.

In addition to severe spending cuts already recognized, we have begun taking further proactive measures to sustain our federal workforce until Congress acts. The depth of these cuts is something members of Congress asked us to avoid in the spring, with assurances of providing financial support before their August recess. As such action did not occur, these cost cutting measures will have an impact on agency operations and will result in: descoping of contracts and a reduction in the number of contractors who assist our federal workforce; restricting contracts via bilateral modifications to breakup periods of performance into smaller increments; and continually evaluating operational requirements to potentially right-size contracts at a future date based on our financial position.

While it is true that our financial situation has somewhat improved due to the increase in revenue and receipts from their historic decline in March and April due to the COVID-19 pandemic, annual receipts and revenue are still below fiscal year (FY) 2020 projections. Without further congressional action, we will be forced to continue taking aggressive cost-reducing actions that will result in additional significant operational adjustments. We anticipate that wait times for pending case inquiries through the USCIS Contact Center will increase, case processing times will increase, and although we will continue conducting naturalization ceremonies, individuals may experience increased wait times in the adjudication of their naturalization applications as there will be fewer contractors to assist our adjudicators in preparing case files for adjudication.

Although we are currently forecasted to end FY 2020 with a carryover balance of non-premium funding in the Immigration Examinations Fee Account to cancel the current

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson

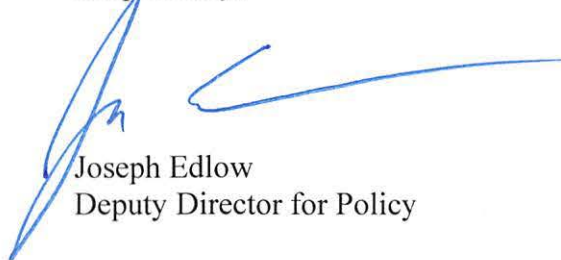
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administrative furlough, USCIS and our employees are urgently depending on Congress to act—during this budget cycle—on a long-term fix that would provide the necessary financial assistance so that we can maintain financial stability throughout FY 2021. Without such action, a future administrative furlough scenario is still possible.

This continues to be a difficult and uncertain time for our workforce. I remain committed to continuing to work with Congress to obtain the long-term assistance needed to avoid any administrative furlough of USCIS employees in the future.

Thank you for your interest in this important issue. Chairwoman Rice will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

Joseph Edlow
Deputy Director for Policy