

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2019

The Honorable Julie Kirchner
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman
Department of Homeland Security
Mail Stop 0180
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Ombudsman Kirchner:

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.

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,



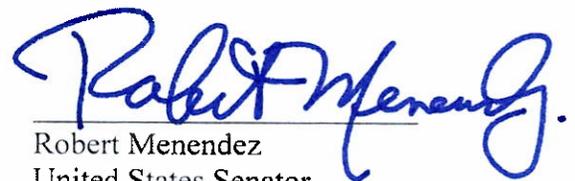
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United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



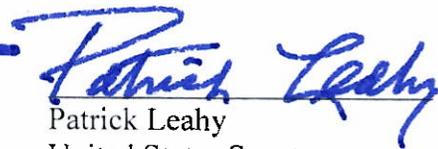
John Thune
United States Senator



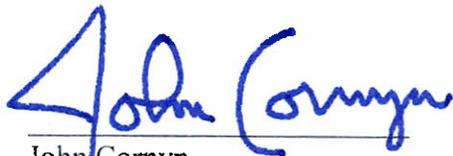
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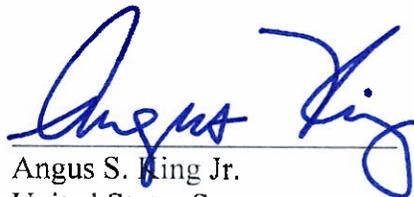
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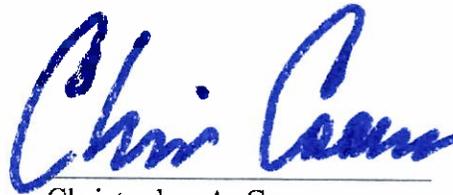
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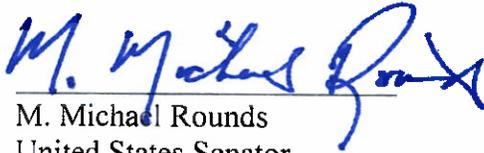
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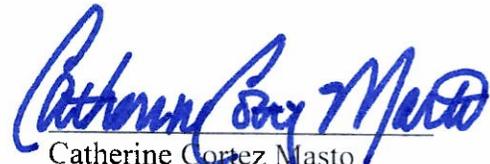
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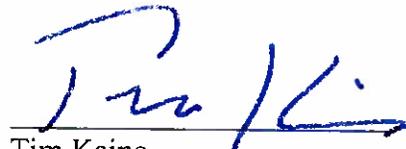
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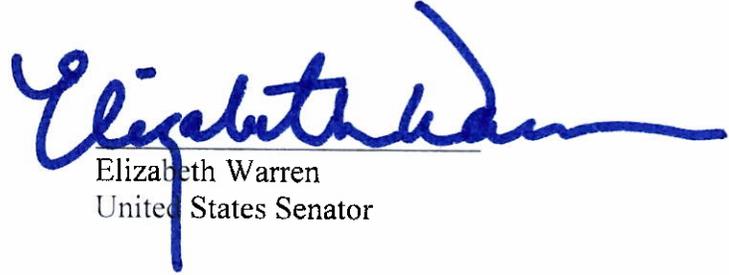
Johnny Isakson
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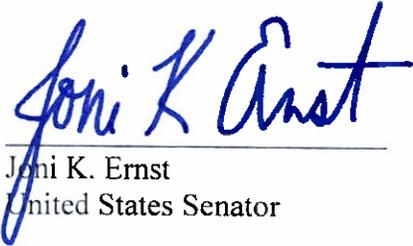
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