

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable Ur Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Director Jaddou,

We write to underscore the importance of addressing the backlog in work permit processing by permanently extending the duration of work authorizations for immigrants and asylum seekers. We appreciate the Biden administration's longstanding commitment to improving processing times, and believe that this step will provide needed relief for workers, employers, and communities.

Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) are a lifeline. They allow immigrants and asylum seekers to provide for themselves and their loved ones and integrate into their new communities while navigating the adjudication process. They also provide critical relief to employers. Our state of Maine, for example, has nearly two jobs open for every job seeker – every willing and able worker makes a difference in our communities, especially in essential but understaffed sectors like health care.

As of this fall, 900,000 people are waiting for their initial EAD application to be processed, while an additional 500,000 are seeking renewals.¹ Based on these figures, and considering USCIS estimates their processing workload in Fiscal Year 2025 will be double what it was in Fiscal Year 2022,² asylum seekers and their families will continue to be subject to significant delays, leaving them unable to work and support their families. While we appreciate the efforts USCIS has made to resolve this issue, such as using supplemental funding appropriated by Congress to alleviate staffing shortages and investing in improved technology, more relief is needed.

¹ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, Counts of Pending Petitions by Days Pending For All Eligibility Categories and (c)(8) Pending Asylum Category, June 30, 2024, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/i765_p_allcat_c08_fy2024_q3.xlsx.

² Citizenship and Immigration Services, Annual Report 2024, Ombudsman, June 28, 2024, p. 47, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/24_0628_cisomb_2024-annual-report.pdf.

To that end, we urge you to expeditiously codify the automatic extension of EADs for up to 540 days, currently authorized under Temporary Rule 89 FR 24628. This temporary rule has been critically important to ensure that immigrants and asylum seekers do not have their employment lapse through no fault of their own while USCIS works through the current backlog of EAD applications.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

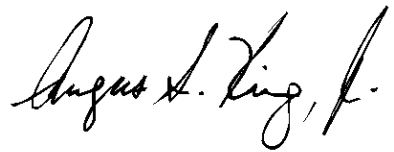
Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Janet T. Mills
Governor of Maine



Angus S. King, Jr
United States Senator