

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 4, 2019

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Chairwoman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland  
Security  
2002 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland  
Security  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Fleischmann:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we respectfully ask that you include bill language preventing United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) from closing its International Operations Division field offices and instead provide additional funds to assist with reducing the agency's caseload backlog.

The International Operations Division at USCIS operates two dozen offices in 21 countries on five continents. These offices are critical for assisting with refugee and asylum cases, helping Americans who are adopting children from abroad, and processing applications to reunite families. Overseas staff also work to combat cases of immigration fraud, an important agency mission that ensures our limited number of visas go to eligible individuals who have a right to petition for legal status under the *Immigration and Nationality Act*. Given the quirks in our immigration system that often require prospective immigrants to apply for an immigrant visa and manage their case from outside the United States, closing these offices would only make the process more difficult.

The administration claims it will redistribute resources from closing international field offices to domestic offices in order to reduce caseload backlogs. Yet, at the same time, the President's Budget request includes proposed increases in visa application fees, including a "deficit reduction" surcharge that would not even fund agency operations. It would seem to be against the interests of prospective immigrants, the mandate of the agency, and the intent of Congress to levy additional fees that will not even help to reduce caseload backlogs. We strongly believe the administration is presenting a false choice – USCIS can continue to operate its international field offices while finding other efficiencies to reduce its backlog of cases.

Though USCIS is currently entirely funded with mandatory fee revenue (with the exception of the E-Verify and the Citizenship and Integration Grant programs), Congress can also assist the agency by appropriating discretionary funding to address USCIS's backlog as we work to fix the problems with our broken immigration system that created this backlog in the first place. To that end, we ask that the committee appropriate discretionary resources to the USCIS Operations and Support account for this purpose, while including the following report language:

The Committee supports the continued operation of International Operations Division field offices and urges USCIS to continue to operate and maintain all existing field offices at currently staffing levels.

USCIS International Operations Division field offices provide critical services that aid our immigration process and prospective immigrants. We believe the Trump Administration's proposal to close these offices runs counter to its stated goal of helping reduce the current backlog. Instead, we fear this is an ill-conceived attempt to reduce legal immigration by reducing access to the agencies that implement our immigration laws. We appreciate your attention to this important request.

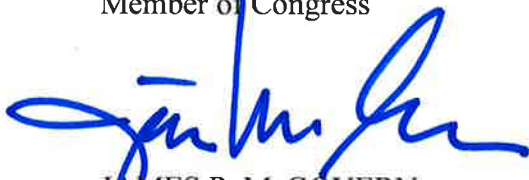
Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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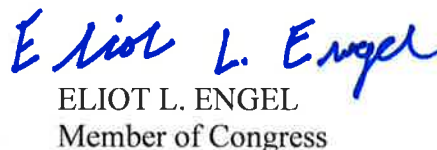
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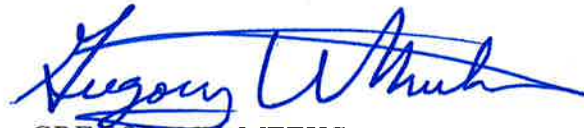
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