

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

I write to express concern regarding the financial state of U.S. Immigration Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and to urge you to include funding for the agency in future COVID-19 relief legislation.

As you know, USCIS is typically funded almost entirely through fee collection, rather than Congressional appropriations. Unfortunately, the policy and management decisions of this Administration, combined with a reduction in application receipts collected by USCIS during the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to the current severe funding shortfall at the agency. To make matters worse, President Trump announced an Executive Order on June 22 that suspends the processing of certain H-1B, H-2B, J and L visas. The decision to block these critical work visas will not only harm American businesses but will also further limit the fees collected by USCIS.

Now, USCIS has announced that the agency will be furloughing workers in August 2020 if it does not receive new funding from Congress. In addition to the enormous processing backlog such furloughs would cause, I have heard from USCIS employees in New Hampshire with significant concerns about the impact these pending furloughs would have on American workers in the Granite State. The workers who would be hardest hit by the loss of their paycheck are those currently working as Immigration Service Assistants or Operation Support Specialists, some of whom have relocated to New Hampshire to pursue a career with USCIS and many of whom, along with their families, will be financially devastated without a steady income. The 21 employees at the USCIS Manchester Field Office, along with the dozens of other New Hampshire residents who work at other Field Office locations, are among the more than 13,000 USCIS employees who, in addition to thousands of contracted workers, stand to lose their income if Congress does not step in.

It is essential that funding appropriated to USCIS in future COVID-19 relief legislation be designated specifically and exclusively to preserve the agency's critical immigration services. Such appropriations must be accompanied by strict language preventing the transfer of this USCIS funding towards enforcement functions of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

I urge you to ensure that this needed funding, along with legislative language clarifying its usage for immigration services only, is provided for the agency as soon as possible. Congress should act now to ensure that USCIS employees can continue to perform their critical work and that our nation's legal immigration system continues to function.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate

CC:

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chairman, Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee

The Honorable Jon Tester, Ranking Member, Senate Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee