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CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP



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August 18, 2025

Hon. Joseph B. Edlow
Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
5900 Capital Gateway Dr.
Camp Springs, MD 20588

Dear Director Edlow:

I write to raise concerns and request clarity about new parole policies and their impact on my constituents. The Administration has instigated considerable changes to the parole program, including the end of categorical parole designations, significantly increased case backlogs, and concerns about staffing levels. This has led to uncertainty for my constituents as they seek to navigate the parole system, and complicated the casework process for my office. I respectfully request that you outline the criteria and process for parole requests following the end of categorical programs, what USCIS has done to increase staffing levels, and how you plan to address backlogs and processing delays for parole and other applications.

Section 212(d)(5)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) grants the executive authority to temporarily parole noncitizens into the United States. While this is not an immigration process, and includes no direct statutory route to citizenship, parole has been utilized for decades to allow people entry to the United States under extraordinary circumstances, including during war and international crises. The previous administration significantly increased the use of parole, in many cases as a means to swiftly admit large numbers of nonimmigrants from vulnerable groups like Afghan allies persecuted by the Taliban, Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion of their country, and nationals of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. The Trump Administration has rejected such “categorical” parole, but individual constituents in my district continue to face the realities of family isolated abroad and challenges updating their own lawful statuses.

These challenges are compounded by long application processing times at USCIS and reports of varying reductions and increases in USCIS staff. By its own metrics USCIS reports that most I-131 parole applications at the California Service center have a processing time of up to 12 and a half months. In February, USCIS dismissed almost 50 probationary employees amid a backdrop of sweeping and often indiscriminate DOGE reductions in force. While many of these factors are understandably in flux, taken together they raise significant and legitimate concerns for my

constituents, many of whom have spent years working to secure safe passage for loved ones, or to normalize their status in the United States.

As a member of Congress, one of my proudest and most solemn roles is performing casework for my constituents, advocating on their behalf as they navigate the federal bureaucracy. As a result, my office has a direct role in this process. I therefore respectfully request you address the following questions in order to address my constituents' legitimate concerns and help my office better serve them:

1. What criteria is USCIS prioritizing in parole cases? Are people from national origins that had categorical protections under the previous administration being considered on a case by case basis? Are the factors that were considered under the previous administration, such as instability in an applicant's country of origin, connections in the United States, and previous service to the United States, as is the case for Afghan allies, still being considered in parole applications?
2. How much have wait times increased for California and other processing centers in 2025? What is USCIS's plan to address processing backlogs and wait times?
3. What does USCIS consider sufficient staffing levels to address application backlogs and constituent inquiries? How is USCIS addressing its staffing shortages? How is USCIS working to ensure staff are available to answer questions from congressional offices performing constituent casework?

Addressing these concerns will help my constituents, help my office to better serve them, and improve the transparency and integrity of the immigration system. I appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress