



HELLIE PINGREE  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT, MAINE

February 15, 2023

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Director Jaddou,

I am writing to you today to express concerns regarding the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's (USCIS) recent Notice of Proposed Rulemaking titled "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements<sup>1</sup>" to increase immigration benefit fees. Specifically, I am concerned about the impact that the proposed increases for O and P visas could have on the creative sector, particularly for arts entities and the communities they serve.

Arts and cultural organizations, artists, venues, and the wider creative sector are vital to countless local economies in Maine and across the U.S. Despite vast contributions to their communities, most arts entities operate on very limited budgets. As the creative sector works to recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued high costs, delays, and unpredictability in visa processing has contributed to a difficult economic recovery. The broader economic implications for the sector are significant; despite the challenges of the pandemic, the arts and culture sector contributed \$876.7 billion to the gross domestic product in 2020<sup>2</sup>.

As you know, the proposed rule would increase petition fees for O visas from \$460 to \$1,655 and for P visas from \$460 to \$1,615 per request. I have serious concerns that fee increases of this magnitude could prove insurmountable for local arts organizations and businesses in my district and around the country, and may make it impossible for many of them to engage international artists at all. Additionally, ongoing processing delays have forced many petitioners to pay the additional premium processing fee of \$2,500 per visa petition in order to receive a visa in time for events, further compounding these costs.

Many arts entities are concerned that their ability to afford these fees has been significantly overestimated in this proposed rule and are alarmed at the prospect of visa fees more than tripling in size. I strongly encourage USCIS to reconsider these dramatic fee increases for O and P visas, and to consider the unique economic needs of local arts venues, nonprofits, and businesses still recovering from the impact of the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/04/2022-27066/us-citizenship-and-immigration-services-fee-schedule-and-changes-to-certain-other-immigration>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020>

Additionally, I urge USCIS to work with the Departments of Homeland Security and State to arrange a stakeholder meeting with representatives from across the arts sector as soon as possible to hear their concerns about other policies affecting their industry, and discuss ways in which the administration can work with the arts sector toward solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and please reach out to Erin Schnell in my office at [Erin.Schnell@mail.house.gov](mailto:Erin.Schnell@mail.house.gov) or (202) 225-6116 with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chellie Pingree". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chellie" being more prominent than the last name "Pingree".

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress