

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2026

The Honorable Joseph Edlow
Director, United States Citizenship and
Immigration Services
US Department of Homeland Security
5900 Capital Gateway Drive
Camp Springs, MD 20746

Dear Director Edlow:

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) currently faces a significant backlog in processing I-129 petitions supporting O and P visa applications. We are concerned that United States-based petitioners are not able to secure nonimmigrant employment-based visas for athletes, entertainers, and artists who are coming to perform in the United States in a timely manner. We urge USCIS to follow the law and process O and P visa petitions within 14 days after completion of the statutory consultation process. These delays not only cause artistic, reputational, and financial harm to U.S. artists and arts organizations, but are harming audiences, the public, and the broader United States economy.

Artists and United States arts organizations have dealt with excessive delays at USCIS and inconsistent consular processing policies, despite current law requiring USCIS to process petitions within 14 days of receipt.¹ As of June 25, 2026, USCIS processing times for petitions filed through regular channels had an estimated timeframe of 12.5 months for O visas and 11.5 months for P visas.² This is unworkable given that the earliest one can petition for an O or P visa is 12 months in advance of an artist's performance. For many organizations, applying through regular channels now risks the possibility of forfeiting the chance to engage international artists. As a result, arts organizations may have to pay the \$2,965 premium processing fee, per application, for a timely response.

Petition delays cause financial harm to arts organizations. United States-based arts organizations often sell tickets and promote international artists in advance. Audience members expect organizations to follow through with scheduled performances by international artists, or risk losing out both financially and culturally. NPR reported that a tour manager from Spain paid for expedited processing of her and her group's P-3 visa application, which was significantly delayed. This delay led the tour manager and dance company to miss part of their tour.³ This adds to the growing list of performances and events that have been disrupted or canceled in light of delays in I-129 petitions supporting O and P visas. As a result, United States-based arts organizations have lost significant revenue and cultural exchange opportunities.

The financial impact of a canceled tour extends past the theaters and organizations who host them. Cancellations reduce local tourism, tax revenue, and money spent on parking, dining, and other services. Our

¹ Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. §1184(c)(6)(D) (2026)

² Processing Times. Accessed July 9, 2026. <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times>.

³ Fischels, Josie. Fear, visa delays and costs are keeping international artists from the Midwest | KCUR - kansas city news and NPR. Accessed July 1, 2026. <https://www.kcur.org/2026-02-04/fear-visa-international-artists-midwest-trump-immigration>.

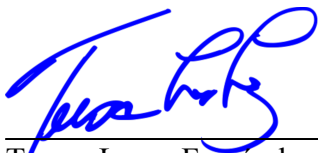
communities, and not just the touring groups, venues, and organizations, will feel economic losses. Those who once viewed the United States as a crucial market now describe it as prohibitively expensive and unpredictable.

Considering these delays and concerns, we respectfully request answers to the following questions no later than 30 days from receipt of this letter:

1. What actions is USCIS taking or considering to address processing delays of I-129 petitions for O and P visas to meet the statutory requirement of processing within 14 days after the completion of the statutory consultation process?
2. What measures will USCIS take to reduce the economic impact of increasing visa petition costs and premium processing fees for small arts companies and nonprofits?
3. What actions will USCIS take to engage with relevant stakeholders on the economic and reputational impacts of processing delays for I-129 petitions supporting O and P visa applications? We request that you meet with and engage with these stakeholders to craft near-term solutions.
4. How many employees of USCIS are tasked with processing and reviewing I-129 petitions for O and P visas?
5. Has the number of employed USCIS workers tasked with processing I-129 petitions for O and P visa applications increased or decreased since April 1, 2024? We request a quarterly breakdown of the total number of staff processing these petitions since April 1, 2024.
6. What is the current backlog for O and P visa-related I-129 petitions? To what extent is the processing time for O and P visa-related I-129 petitions expected to rise or decrease by the end of 2026?
7. How many O and P visa-related I-129 petitions are processed within the statutory requirement timeframe without having to pay for expedited processing?

We urge USCIS tackle the significant backlog of petitions and applications immediately to restore reliability to a process that is essential for U.S. arts employers, artists, and audiences. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



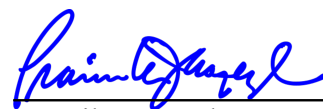
María Elvira Salazar
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Chellie Pingree
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Pramila Jayapal
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