U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of the Director
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernández
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Leger Fernández:

Thank you for your July 23, 2026 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

USCIS recognizes the important cultural, reputational, and economic contributions international performers and arts organizations make to communities across the United States. We also recognize that timely and predictable petition processing is critical to planning tour schedules, ticket sales, contracts, and related local economic activity, and we remain focused on maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the timeliness and reliability of this workload. USCIS welcomes input from stakeholders to better understand how processing times for O and P petitions affect arts organizations, touring companies, and related businesses.

In recent months, USCIS has experienced a notable surge in Form I-129 filings for O and P classifications, along with a substantial increase in requests for premium processing for these petitions. This growth has required us to carefully balance our premium processing service commitments with our responsibility to adjudicate non-premium cases as efficiently as possible. To address these pressures, USCIS is reviewing staffing and workflow across service centers and is implementing operational measures to improve processing times for I-129 O and P petitions. These measures include adjusting workload distribution across service centers, using targeted staffing strategies, and identifying process efficiencies intended to reduce overall adjudication times.

We also recognize that small arts organizations and nonprofit petitioners may face challenges when petition and premium processing costs are combined with the logistical and financial demands of organizing international tours and programs. Within our statutory and regulatory framework, USCIS is reviewing workload management for Form I-129 O and P to minimize avoidable delays, including by calibrating staffing levels and resources within broader employment-based workloads to meet demand. Petitioners can find information about how and when they may submit a request for expedited processing on the USCIS website.[1]

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Form I-129 petitions for O and P classifications are processed within broader employment-based workloads across USCIS service centers, rather than by a single, fixed group of employees. Staffing levels for the adjudication of these petitions vary over time based on filing volumes, operational needs, available resources, and targeted surge efforts. When we identify growing backlogs or sustained increases in O and P petition receipts, we adjust staffing, assignments, and other resources to address them as effectively as possible while maintaining the integrity and quality of adjudications.

To inform these resource decisions and to assess workload trends, USCIS tracks the number of pending I-129 petitions in O and P classifications and monitors average processing times at our service centers. As of August 5, 2026, USCIS had approximately 9,145 pending O and 2,553 pending P petitions. The current average processing times, measured from receipt to adjudication, are 1.7 months for premium O classification filings and 10.9 months for non-premium O classification filings. Similarly, the current average processing times are 1.3 months for premium P classification filings and nine months for non-premium classification filings.

Please note Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) section 214(c)(6)(D) does not establish a general, across-the-board 14-day adjudication mandate for all O and P petitions. Rather, the 14-day processing goal applies when USCIS has requested an advisory opinion from the appropriate labor organization and the 15-day response period has expired. In those situations, USCIS proceeds without further delay, consistent with the statute. USCIS strives to adjudicate all O and P petitions as promptly as possible, while ensuring that petitioners and beneficiaries meet all statutory and regulatory eligibility requirements.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

Joseph B. Edlow
Director

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of the Director
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

September 14, 2026

The Honorable María Elvira Salazar
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Salazar:

Thank you for your July 23, 2026 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

USCIS recognizes the important cultural, reputational, and economic contributions international performers and arts organizations make to communities across the United States. We also recognize that timely and predictable petition processing is critical to planning tour schedules, ticket sales, contracts, and related local economic activity, and we remain focused on maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the timeliness and reliability of this workload. USCIS welcomes input from stakeholders to better understand how processing times for O and P petitions affect arts organizations, touring companies, and related businesses.

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Joseph B. Edlow
Director

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Office of the Director
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pingree:

Thank you for your July 23, 2026 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

USCIS recognizes the important cultural, reputational, and economic contributions international performers and arts organizations make to communities across the United States. We also recognize that timely and predictable petition processing is critical to planning tour schedules, ticket sales, contracts, and related local economic activity, and we remain focused on maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the timeliness and reliability of this workload. USCIS welcomes input from stakeholders to better understand how processing times for O and P petitions affect arts organizations, touring companies, and related businesses.

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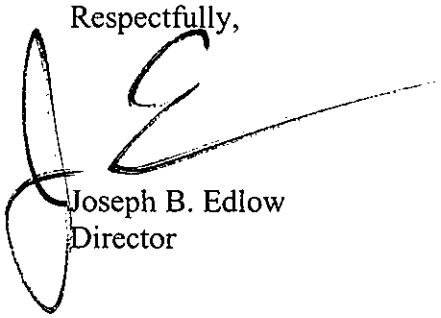
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Joseph B. Edlow
Director

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of the Director
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Maxwell Alejandro Frost
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Frost:

Thank you for your July 23, 2026 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Jayapal:

Thank you for your July 23, 2026 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

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