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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Rm. A3042
Washington, DC 20529

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

[redacted]

MAY 06 2005

FILE: [redacted] Office: MIAMI, FL Date:

IN RE: Petitioner: [redacted]

PETITION: Petition for Special Immigrant Juvenile Pursuant to Section 203(b)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(4), as described in Section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J).

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

[redacted]

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The special immigrant visa petition was denied by the District Director, Miami, Florida, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a 19-year-old native and citizen of Haiti. He seeks classification as a special immigrant juvenile pursuant to section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(27)(J).

The district director determined the petitioner had failed to establish that he was dependent upon the juvenile court and eligible for long-term foster care, as set forth in Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (8 C.F.R.) section 204.11. The petition was denied accordingly.

Counsel asserts on appeal that the petitioner is eligible for special immigrant juvenile status (SIJS) because a juvenile court found him to be dependent and eligible for long-term care. Counsel indicates that although the petitioner is now over eighteen years old, he remains eligible for special immigrant juvenile status because he qualifies for Independent Living through the Department of Children and Family Services in Florida.

Section 203(b)(4) of the Act provides classification to qualified special immigrant juveniles as described in section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Act. Section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Act defines a "special immigrant juvenile" in pertinent part as an immigrant who is present in the United States:

> (i) who has been declared dependent on a juvenile court located in the United States or whom such a court has legally committed to, or placed under the custody of, an agency or department of a State and who has been deemed eligible by that court for long-term foster care due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment;
>
> (ii) for whom it has been determined in administrative or judicial proceedings that it would not be in the alien's best interest to be returned to the alien's or parent's previous country of nationality or country of last habitual residence; and
>
> (iii) in whose case the Attorney General expressly consents to the dependency order serving as a precondition to the grant of special immigrant juvenile status

The regulatory provisions contained in 8 C.F.R. § 204.11(a) and (c), clarify, in pertinent part that:

> a) [A] child who is eligible for long-term foster care will normally be expected to remain in foster care until reaching the age of majority, unless the child is adopted or placed in a guardianship situation.
>
> (c) [A]n alien is eligible for classification as a special immigrant under section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Act if the alien:
>
> > (1) Is under twenty-one years of age;
> >
> > (2) Is unmarried;

(3) Has been declared dependent upon a juvenile court located in the United States in accordance with state law governing such declarations of dependency, while the alien was in the United States and under the jurisdiction of the court;

(4) Has been deemed eligible by the juvenile court for long-term foster care;

(5) Continues to be dependent upon the juvenile court and eligible for long-term foster care, such declaration, dependency or eligibility not having been vacated, terminated, or otherwise ended; and

(6) Has been the subject of judicial proceedings or administrative proceedings authorized or recognized by the juvenile court in which it has been determined that it would not be in the alien's best interest to be returned to the country of nationality or last habitual residence of the beneficiary or his or her parent or parents

The record contains a March 24, 2004, Circuit Court of the 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami-Dade County, Florida, Order regarding the petitioner's eligibility for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. In addition, the record contains a Haitian birth certificate reflecting that the petitioner was born on March 25, 1986. He therefore turned eighteen-years-old on March 25, 2004.

The AAO notes that the determination of whether a petitioner is dependent upon the juvenile court and eligible for long-term foster care, is made in accordance with applicable state law. Title V, Florida Statutes (Florida Statutes), Chapter 39.01 defines "child" as an unmarried person under the age of eighteen. Florida Statutes, Chapter 39.013 discusses a court's jurisdiction in juvenile dependency proceedings, and states, in pertinent part, "[w]hen the court obtains jurisdiction of any child who has been found to be dependent, the court shall retain jurisdiction, unless relinquished by its order, until the child reaches 18 years of age."

Title XXX, Florida Statutes, Chapter 409.1451(1)(a) provides, in pertinent part that, "[t]he Department of Children and Family Services . . . shall administer a system of independent living transition services to enable older children in foster care and young adults who exit foster care at age 18 to make the transition to self-sufficiency as adults." Florida Statutes chapter 409.1451(2)(b) states in pertinent part that, "[t]he department shall serve young adults who have reached 18 years of age but are not yet 23 years of age and who were in foster care when they turned 18 years of age by providing services pursuant to subsection (5)."

The AAO finds that the provisions contained in Florida Statutes, chapter 409 fail to establish that the petitioner continues to be dependent upon the juvenile court and eligible for long-term foster care, as set forth in 8 C.F.R. §204.11(a)(5). Rather, the independent living provisions contained in Florida Statutes, chapter 409 are designed to assist young adults who are no longer eligible for foster care because they turned eighteen and thus no longer meet the definition of "child".

The AAO finds that pursuant to the statutory provisions contained in Florida Statutes, chapter 39, the petitioner was no longer dependent upon the juvenile court and eligible for long-term foster care as of his eighteenth birthday on March 25, 2004. The petitioner therefore does not meet the requirement set

forth in 8 C.F.R. § 204.11(c)(5), and he is ineligible for classification as a special immigrant juvenile, pursuant to section 101(a)(27)(J) of the Act.

In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proof rests solely with the petitioner. *See* Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner in the present matter has not met his burden. The appeal will therefore be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.