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U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

[REDACTED]

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FILE: [REDACTED] Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: **FEB 17 2011**

IN RE: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility under section 212(h) of the  
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(h)

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:

[REDACTED]

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

for Perry Rhew  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Director, California Service Center, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The applicant is a native and citizen of Cuba who was found to be inadmissible to the United States pursuant to section 212(a)(2)(A)(i)(I) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(2)(A)(i)(I), for having committed crimes involving moral turpitude. The applicant seeks a waiver of inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(h) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(h), in order to remain in the United States with his lawful permanent resident spouse and daughter.

In a decision dated July 25, 2008, the director found that the applicant had failed to establish extreme hardship to his qualifying relatives and denied the applicant accordingly.

In a Notice of Appeal to the AAO (Form I-290B), dated August 20, 2008, counsel states that the director abused her discretion and did not follow the law in denying the applicant's waiver application. He states that it was a clear violation of the applicant's due process to not afford the applicant an interview. In addition, he states that the Cuban Adjustment Act was meant to be applied liberally, that the director failed to consider the travel restricts the U.S. government has implemented for travel to Cuba, that the applicant's crimes were not aggravated felonies, and that sufficient time has passed to show rehabilitation.

The AAO notes that constitutional issues are not within the appellate jurisdiction of the AAO, therefore counsel's assertions regarding a due process violation will not be addressed in the present decision.

Section 212(a)(2)(A) of the Act states, in pertinent parts:

- (i) [A]ny alien convicted of, or who admits having committed, or who admits committing acts which constitute the essential elements of –
  - (I) a crime involving moral turpitude (other than a purely political offense) or an attempt or conspiracy to commit such a crime . . . is inadmissible.

The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) held in *Matter of Perez-Contreras*, 20 I&N Dec. 615, 617-18 (BIA 1992), that:

[M]oral turpitude is a nebulous concept, which refers generally to conduct that shocks the public conscience as being inherently base, vile, or depraved, contrary to the rules of morality and the duties owed between man and man, either one's fellow man or society in general....

In determining whether a crime involves moral turpitude, we consider whether the act is accompanied by a vicious motive or corrupt mind. Where knowing or intentional conduct is an element of an offense, we have found moral turpitude to be present. However, where the required mens rea may not be determined from the statute, moral turpitude does not inhere.

(Citations omitted.)

In the recently decided *Matter of Silva-Trevino*, 24 I&N Dec. 687 (A.G. 2008), the Attorney General articulated a new methodology for determining whether a conviction is a crime involving moral turpitude where the language of the criminal statute in question encompasses conduct involving moral turpitude and conduct that does not. First, in evaluating whether an offense is one that categorically involves moral turpitude, an adjudicator reviews the criminal statute at issue to determine if there is a “realistic probability, not a theoretical possibility,” that the statute would be applied to reach conduct that does not involve moral turpitude. *Id.* at 698 (citing *Gonzalez v. Duenas-Alvarez*, 549 U.S. 183, 193 (2007)). A realistic probability exists where, at the time of the proceeding, an “actual (as opposed to hypothetical) case exists in which the relevant criminal statute was applied to conduct that did not involve moral turpitude. If the statute has not been so applied in any case (including the alien’s own case), the adjudicator can reasonably conclude that all convictions under the statute may categorically be treated as ones involving moral turpitude.” *Id.* at 697, 708 (citing *Duenas-Alvarez*, 549 U.S. at 193).

However, if a case exists in which the criminal statute in question was applied to conduct that does not involve moral turpitude, “the adjudicator cannot categorically treat all convictions under that statute as convictions for crimes that involve moral turpitude.” 24 I&N Dec. at 697 (citing *Duenas-Alvarez*, 549 U.S. at 185-88, 193). An adjudicator then engages in a second-stage inquiry in which the adjudicator reviews the “record of conviction” to determine if the conviction was based on conduct involving moral turpitude. *Id.* at 698-699, 703-704, 708. The record of conviction consists of documents such as the indictment, the judgment of conviction, jury instructions, a signed guilty plea, and the plea transcript. *Id.* at 698, 704, 708.

If review of the record of conviction is inconclusive, an adjudicator then considers any additional evidence deemed necessary or appropriate to resolve accurately the moral turpitude question. 24 I&N Dec. at 699-704, 708-709. However, this “does not mean that the parties would be free to present any and all evidence bearing on an alien’s conduct leading to the conviction. (citation omitted). The sole purpose of the inquiry is to ascertain the nature of the prior conviction; it is not an invitation to relitigate the conviction itself.” *Id.* at 703.

The record reflects that on February 11, 2003, the applicant was convicted in Miami-Dade County, Florida, of dealing in stolen property under Florida Statutes § 812.019(2) and obtaining goods by use of false credit cards under Florida Statutes § 817.481(1) and (3)(b). The applicant was sentenced to 18 months probation.

At the time of the applicant’s conviction, Florida Statutes § 812.019(2) provided:

- (2) Any person who initiates, organizes, plans, finances, directs, manages, or supervises the theft of property and traffics in such stolen property shall be guilty of a felony of the first degree, punishable as provided in ss. 775.082, 775.083, and 775.084.

The AAO notes that courts have found that possessing, transporting, and receiving stolen goods with the knowledge that the goods are stolen is a crime involving moral turpitude. *Michel v. INS*, 206

F.3d 253 (2nd Cir. 2000) (New York Statute involved knowing possession of stolen property, with the intention to benefit himself or a person other than the owner or to impede the recovery by the owner); *Wadman v. INS*, 329 F.2d 812 (9th Cir. 1964); Matter of A-, 7 I. & N. Dec. 626 (BIA 1957) (knowledge, as an essential element of the crime, is implied (Article 648, Italian Penal code)); *Matter of De La Nues*, 18 I. & N. Dec. 140 (BIA 1981), § 22-2205 District of Columbia Code; *Accord De Leon-Reynoso v. Ashcroft*, 293 F.3d 633 (3rd Cir. 2002) (receiving stolen property in violation of Pennsylvania statute required subjective belief property was stolen, and therefore, is a crime involving moral turpitude); *U.S. v. Castro*, 26 F.3d 557 (5th Cir. 1994) (receiving stolen autos). *Matter of Fernandez*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 24 (BIA 1972) (transporting forgery securities in interstate commerce in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2314 held to be a crime involving moral turpitude). See also, *Matter of Acosta*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 338 (BIA 1973) (transporting forgery securities in foreign commerce). Finally, trafficking in counterfeit goods and services had been held to be a crime involving moral turpitude. *Matter of Kochlani*, 24 I. & N. Dec. 128 (BIA 2007).

The AAO notes that Florida courts have found that a necessary element in violating Florida Statutes § 812.019(2) is knowledge at the time of receiving the goods that the goods were stolen, or facts putting a man of ordinary intelligence and caution on inquiry that the goods may be stolen. See *Hart v. State* 92 Fla. 809, 110 So. 253 (1926); *Worster v. State*, 82 Fla. 463, 90 So. 188 (1922). Thus, the AAO finds the applicant's conviction under Florida Statutes § 812.019(2) to be a crime involving moral turpitude.

At the time of the applicant's conviction, Florida Statutes § 812.481(1) and (3)(b) provided:

- (1) It shall be unlawful for any person knowingly to obtain or attempt to obtain credit, or to purchase or attempt to purchase any goods, property or service, by the use of any false, fictitious, counterfeit, or expired credit card, telephone number, credit number, or other credit device, or by the use of any credit card, telephone number, credit number, or other credit device of another without the authority of the person to whom such card, number or device was issued, or by the use of any credit card, telephone number, credit number, or other credit device in any case where such card, number or device has been revoked and notice of revocation has been given to the person to whom issued.

...

- (3)(b) If the value of the property, goods, or services obtained or which are sought to be obtained in violation of this section is less than \$300 the offender shall be guilty of petit larceny.

The AAO notes that courts have commonly found that any crime involving fraud is a crime involving moral turpitude. *Burr v. INS*, 350 F.2d 87, 91 (9th Cir. 1965), *cert denied*, 383 U.S. 915 (1966). Courts have also found that the fraudulent or illegal use of credit cards is a crime involving moral turpitude. *Olugbemiga Balogun v. Ashcroft*, 270 F.3d 274 (5th Cir. 2001), Alabama Penal Code; *Adekunle Balogun v. Gonzalez*, 2005 WL 900204 (9th Cir. 2005); *Matter of Chouinard*, 11 I. & N. Dec. 839 (BIA 1966). Thus, the AAO finds that the applicant's conviction under Florida Statutes § 812.481(1) is a crime involving moral turpitude.

Section 212(h) of the Act provides, in pertinent part:

(h) The Attorney General [Secretary of Homeland Security] may, in his discretion, waive the application of subparagraph (A)(i)(I), (B), . . . of subsection (a)(2) . . . if –

....

(B) in the case of an immigrant who is the spouse, parent, son, or daughter of a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence if it is established to the satisfaction of the Attorney General [Secretary] that the alien's denial of admission would result in extreme hardship to the United States citizen or lawfully resident spouse, parent, son, or daughter of such alien . . . .

A waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(h) of the Act is dependent on a showing that the bar to admission imposes extreme hardship on a qualifying relative, which includes the U.S. citizen or lawfully resident spouse, parent, son or daughter of the applicant. Hardship to the applicant can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to a qualifying relative. The applicant's daughter and spouse are the only qualifying relatives in this case. If extreme hardship to a qualifying relative is established, the applicant is statutorily eligible for a waiver, and then a determination is made as to whether a favorable exercise of discretion is warranted. *See Matter of Mendez-Moralez*, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (BIA 1996).

As a qualifying relative is not required to depart the United States as a consequence of an applicant's inadmissibility, two distinct factual scenarios exist should a waiver application be denied: either the qualifying relative will join the applicant to reside abroad or the qualifying relative will remain in the United States. Ascertaining the actual course of action that will be taken is complicated by the fact that an applicant may easily assert a plan for the qualifying relative to relocate abroad or to remain in the United States depending on which scenario presents the greatest prospective hardship, even though no intention exists to carry out the alleged plan in reality. *Cf. Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. 880, 885 (BIA 1994) (addressing separation of minor child from both parents applying for suspension of deportation). Thus, we interpret the statutory language of the various waiver provisions in section 212 of the Act to require an applicant to establish extreme hardship to his or her qualifying relative(s) under both possible scenarios. To endure the hardship of separation when extreme hardship could be avoided by joining the applicant abroad, or to endure the hardship of relocation when extreme hardship could be avoided by remaining in the United States, is a matter of choice and not the result of removal or inadmissibility. As the Board of Immigration Appeals stated in *Matter of Ige*:

[W]e consider the critical issue . . . to be whether a child would suffer extreme hardship if he accompanied his parent abroad. If, as in this case, no hardship would ensue, then the fact that the child might face hardship if left in the United States would be the result of parental choice, not the parent's deportation.

*Id.* See also *Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. 627, 632-33 (BIA 1996).

Extreme hardship is “not a definable term of fixed and inflexible content or meaning,” but “necessarily depends upon the facts and circumstances peculiar to each case.” *Matter of Hwang*, 10 I&N Dec. 448, 451 (BIA 1964). In *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, the Board provided a list of factors it deemed relevant in determining whether an alien has established extreme hardship to a qualifying relative. 22 I&N Dec. 560, 565 (BIA 1999). The factors include the presence of a lawful permanent resident or United States citizen spouse or parent in this country; the qualifying relative’s family ties outside the United States; the conditions in the country or countries to which the qualifying relative would relocate and the extent of the qualifying relative’s ties in such countries; the financial impact of departure from this country; and significant conditions of health, particularly when tied to an unavailability of suitable medical care in the country to which the qualifying relative would relocate. *Id.* The Board added that not all of the foregoing factors need be analyzed in any given case and emphasized that the list of factors was not exclusive. *Id.* at 566.

The Board has also held that the common or typical results of deportation, removal and inadmissibility do not constitute extreme hardship, and has listed certain individual hardship factors considered common rather than extreme. These factors include: economic disadvantage, loss of current employment, inability to maintain one’s present standard of living, inability to pursue a chosen profession, separation from family members, severing community ties, cultural readjustment after living in the United States for many years, cultural adjustment of qualifying relatives who have never lived outside the United States, inferior economic and educational opportunities in the foreign country, or inferior medical facilities in the foreign country. See generally *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, 22 I&N Dec. at 568; *Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. at 631-32; *Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 883; *Matter of Ngai*, 19 I&N Dec. 245, 246-47 (Comm’r 1984); *Matter of Kim*, 15 I&N Dec. 88, 89-90 (BIA 1974); *Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. 810, 813 (BIA 1968).

However, though hardships may not be extreme when considered abstractly or individually, the Board has made it clear that “[r]elevant factors, though not extreme in themselves, must be considered in the aggregate in determining whether extreme hardship exists.” *Matter of O-J-O*, 21 I&N Dec. 381, 383 (BIA 1996) (quoting *Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 882). The adjudicator “must consider the entire range of factors concerning hardship in their totality and determine whether the combination of hardships takes the case beyond those hardships ordinarily associated with deportation.” *Id.*

We observe that the actual hardship associated with an abstract hardship factor such as family separation, economic disadvantage, cultural readjustment, et cetera, differs in nature and severity depending on the unique circumstances of each case, as does the cumulative hardship a qualifying relative experiences as a result of aggregated individual hardships. See, e.g., *In re Bing Chih Kao and Mei Tsui Lin*, 23 I&N Dec. 45, 51 (BIA 2001) (distinguishing *Matter of Pilch* regarding hardship faced by qualifying relatives on the basis of variations in the length of residence in the United States and the ability to speak the language of the country to which they would relocate).

Family separation, for instance, has been found to be a common result of inadmissibility or removal in some cases. See *Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. at 813. Nevertheless, family ties are to be considered in analyzing hardship. See *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, 22 I&N Dec. at 565-66. The question of whether family separation is the ordinary result of inadmissibility or removal may depend on the nature of family relationship considered. For example, in *Matter of Shaughnessy*, the Board considered the scenario of parents being separated from their soon-to-be adult son, finding

that this separation would not result in extreme hardship to the parents. *Id.* at 811-12; *see also U.S. v. Arrieta*, 224 F.3d 1076, 1082 (9th Cir. 2000) (“Mr. Arrieta was not a spouse, but a son and brother. It was evident from the record that the effect of the deportation order would be separation rather than relocation.”). In *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, the Board considered the scenario of the respondent’s spouse accompanying him to Mexico, finding that she would not experience extreme hardship from losing “physical proximity to her family” in the United States. 22 I&N Dec. at 566-67.

The decision in *Cervantes-Gonzalez* reflects the norm that spouses reside with one another and establish a life together such that separating from one another is likely to result in substantial hardship. It is common for both spouses to relocate abroad if one of them is not allowed to stay in the United States, which typically results in separation from other family members living in the United States. Other decisions reflect the expectation that minor children will remain with their parents, upon whom they usually depend for financial and emotional support. *See, e.g., Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 886 (“[I]t is generally preferable for children to be brought up by their parents.”). Therefore, the most important single hardship factor may be separation, particularly where spouses and minor children are concerned. *Salcido-Salcido*, 138 F.3d at 1293 (quoting *Contreras-Buenfil v. INS*, 712 F.2d 401, 403 (9th Cir. 1983)); *Cerrillo-Perez*, 809 F.2d at 1422.

Regardless of the type of family relationship involved, the hardship resulting from family separation is determined based on the actual impact of separation on an applicant, and all hardships must be considered in determining whether the combination of hardships takes the case beyond the consequences ordinarily associated with removal or inadmissibility. *Matter of O-J-O-*, 21 I&N Dec. at 383. Nevertheless, though we require an applicant to show that a qualifying relative would experience extreme hardship both in the event of relocation and in the event of separation, in analyzing the latter scenario, we give considerable, if not predominant, weight to the hardship of separation itself, particularly in cases involving the separation of spouses from one another and/or minor children from a parent. *Salcido-Salcido*, 138 F.3d at 1293.

The record of hardship includes a brief from counsel. In his brief counsel states that the applicant is the principal financial provider for his family and that they would face economic devastation without his support. He also states that the applicant provides psychological and emotional support and stability to his family. Counsel states that the applicant’s daughter is at critical stage in her life where the absence of her father could leave emotional scars. Counsel states further that the condition in Cuba as well as the United States’ relations with Cuba must be considered. Counsel asserts that Cuba is a communist dictatorship and that the U.S. government severely restricts travel to Cuba. Finally, counsel states that in weighing the positive and negative factors in the applicant’s case a grant of relief is warranted.

The AAO cannot find, based on the current record, that the applicant’s spouse and/or daughter would suffer extreme hardship as a result of his inadmissibility. Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. 158, 165 (Comm. 1998) (citing *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972)). Without documentary evidence to support the claim, the assertions of counsel will not satisfy the petitioner’s burden of proof. The unsupported assertions of counsel do not constitute evidence. *Matter of Obaighena*, 19 I&N Dec.

533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Laureano*, 19 I&N Dec. 1 (BIA 1983); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980).

The AAO notes that the record does not contain any documentary evidence to support the claims made by counsel. The record does not contain any statements from the applicant's family detailing the emotional and financial hardship they would suffer, it does not contain any evidence of financial dependence on the applicant, nor does it contain any information describing the specific conditions the applicant's family members would face in Cuba. Moreover, the AAO notes that, as stated above, before the weighing of positive and negative factors can occur, the applicant must show extreme hardship to a qualifying relative.

The AAO finds that the applicant has failed to establish eligibility for a waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(h) of the Act. Having found the applicant statutorily ineligible for relief, no purpose would be served in discussing whether he merits a waiver as a matter of discretion.

In proceedings for an application for a waiver of grounds of inadmissibility under section 212(h) of the Act, the burden of establishing that the application merits approval remains entirely with the applicant. *See* section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, the applicant has not met that burden. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.