U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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[redacted]

FILE: [redacted] Office: MEXICO CITY (CIUDAD JUAREZ) Date: MAR 1 1 2011

IN RE: Applicant: [redacted]

APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(v)

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,

Ellen C. Johnson

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Acting District Director, Mexico City. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The record reflects that the applicant is a native and citizen of Mexico who was found to be inadmissible to the United States pursuant to section 212(a)(9)(B)(i)(II) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i)(II), for having been unlawfully present in the United States for more than one year. The applicant is married to a lawful permanent resident and seeks a waiver of inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(v), in order to reside with her husband and children in the United States.

The acting district director found that the applicant failed to establish extreme hardship to a qualifying relative and denied the application accordingly. *Decision of the Acting District Director*, dated August 19, 2008.

On appeal, counsel contends the applicant was unaware she needed to submit evidence to support her waiver application. Counsel submits new evidence to show that the applicant's husband, [redacted] will experience extreme psychological and financial hardship if his wife's waiver application were denied.

The record contains, *inter alia*: a copy of the marriage certificate of the applicant and her husband, [redacted], indicating they were married on March 3, 1998; a letter from the applicant; a letter from [redacted] a letter from the couple's child's optician and copies of her medical records; letters from [redacted] parents; a letter from [redacted] mother's physician; letters of support from family members; and an approved Petition for Alien Relative (Form I-130). The entire record was reviewed and considered in rendering this decision on the appeal.

Section 212(a)(9)(B) of the Act provides, in pertinent part:

> (i) In General - Any alien (other than an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence) who -
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> . . . .
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> (II) has been unlawfully present in the United States for one year or more, and who again seeks admission within 10 years of the date of such alien's departure or removal from the United States, is inadmissible.
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> . . . .
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> (v) Waiver. – The Attorney General [now the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary)] has sole discretion to waive clause (i) in the case of an immigrant who is

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

In this case, the record shows, and the applicant concedes, that she entered the United States in December 2000 without inspection and remained until her departure in January 2007. *Applicant's Brief in Support of Appeal*, dated September 12, 2008; *Letter from* [redacted] dated September 3, 2008. The applicant accrued unlawful presence of more than six years. Accordingly, she is inadmissible to the United States under section 212(a)(9)(B)(i)(II) of the Act for being unlawfully present in the United States for a period of one year or more and seeking admission to the United States within ten years of her last departure.

A waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) 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 or parent of the applicant. Hardship to the applicant or her children can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to a qualifying relative. The applicant's husband is the only qualifying relative in this case. If extreme hardship to a qualifying relative is established, the applicant is statutorily eligible for a waiver, and USCIS then assesses 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.

In this case, the applicant's husband, [redacted], states that he and his wife have three children who are one, six, and nine years old. [redacted] contends that his children have been living in Mexico with his wife since she departed the United States because he cannot take care of them while he is working. He states that he has suffered financially and emotionally since his wife and children left. [redacted] states he has only seen his family twice since they left and that his youngest son does not know him. He contends it has been difficult to maintain the family's home in the United States while supporting his wife and children in Mexico. He states that he hopes his children can continue their education in the United States. *Letter from* [redacted], dated September 4, 2008.

A letter from the applicant states that it was poor judgment for her to enter the United States before her visa became available. She states that she has dedicated herself to her husband and her children and does not work outside the home. The applicant states that when she was living in the United States with their children, their daughter, [redacted], was operated on due to a problem with her eyes and vision. The applicant contends [redacted] is currently receiving therapy in Mexico, but she hopes [redacted] can receive follow-up treatment in the United States. In addition, the applicant states that she gave birth to her son, [redacted] after returning to Mexico. She claims it has been heartbreaking that her son does not know his father. According to the applicant, her husband must stay in the United States to work. She claims her husband lost his job after his second trip to Mexico, but was able to find another job. She asks that her family be permitted to be reunited in the United States. *Letter from* [redacted] dated September 3, 2008.

A letter from an optician in Mexico states that Maria is being treated for strabismus. According to the optician, [redacted] was operated on at age 4 in the United States and her condition has returned." The optician states that there are therapy centers in the United States that are capable of treating this condition, which will require more than a year of therapy. *Letter from* [redacted] dated September 3, 2008.

Copies of [redacted] medical records indicate that her "left eye [was] deviating inward," and that she underwent a "bimedial rectus recession." *Clinic Notes*, dated July 19, 2001, and September 9, 2002. The notes indicate that "it is important to follow up because of her risk of amblyopia or recurrent strabismus." *Clinic Notes*, dated October 29, 2002.

A letter from [redacted] mother states that [redacted] has been very sad since his wife and children departed the United States. According to [redacted] mother, she has gone to Mexico and seen the children, who are also very sad and miss their father. *Letter from* [redacted] undated; *see also Letter from* [redacted] dated September 6, 2008 (letter from [redacted] sister stating that [redacted] is depressed and has lost weight, and that the applicant took [redacted]'s mother to doctor's appointments when she lived in the United States). A letter from [redacted] mother's physician states that she has "DM2, [h]ypertension, [h]yperlipidemia, and [d]yspepsia." *Letter from* [redacted], dated September 5, 2008.

After a careful review of the record, there is insufficient evidence to show that [redacted] will suffer extreme hardship if his wife's waiver application were denied.

If [redacted] decides to stay in the United States, their situation is typical of individuals separated as a result of inadmissibility or exclusion and does not rise to the level of extreme hardship based on the record. Regarding [redacted]'s eye and vision problem, as stated above, hardship to the applicant's children can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to [redacted], the only qualifying relative in this case. There is insufficient evidence in the record to show that any problems [redacted] may be experiencing has caused or will cause extreme hardship to [redacted]. The letter from [redacted] optician fails to explain her condition in plain language, describe what therapy entails, or address the

prognosis or severity of her condition. *Letter from* [redacted] *supra.* In addition, the applicant states that Maria is receiving therapy in Mexico and, significantly, the applicant does not allege that this therapy is inadequate, unsafe, or otherwise ineffective. *Letter from* [redacted]. Without more detailed information, the AAO is not in the position to reach conclusions regarding the severity of any medical condition or the treatment and assistance needed.

Regarding the financial hardship claim, there is insufficient evidence showing that [redacted] hardship is extreme. There is no evidence in the record addressing [redacted] income or wages and there is no evidence addressing his regular, monthly expenses. Although the AAO does not doubt that supporting his wife and children in Mexico causes some financial hardship to [redacted] without more detailed information addressing the couple's income or total expenses, there is insufficient evidence in the record to determine the extent of his financial problems.

To the extent [redacted] as well as his extended family, are depressed and lonely without his wife and children, the AAO is sympathetic to the family's circumstances. However, federal courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals have repeatedly held that the common results of inadmissibility or exclusion are insufficient to prove extreme hardship. For example, *Matter of Pilch, supra*, held that emotional hardship caused by severing family and community ties is a common result of deportation and does not constitute extreme hardship. In addition, *Perez v. INS,* 96 F.3d 390 (9th Cir. 1996), held that the common results of deportation are insufficient to prove extreme hardship and defined extreme hardship as hardship that was unusual or beyond that which would normally be expected upon deportation. *See also Hassan v. INS,* 927 F.2d 465, 468 (9th Cir. 1991) (uprooting of family and separation from friends does not necessarily amount to extreme hardship but rather represents the type of inconvenience and hardship experienced by the families of most aliens being deported). Moreover, although the record indicates that [redacted] mother has some medical problems, she is not a qualifying relative under the Act and neither the applicant nor [redacted] allege that his mother's medical issues cause him extreme hardship.

Furthermore, the record does not show that [redacted] would suffer extreme hardship if he were to return to Mexico to be with his wife. The record shows that [redacted] is currently thirty-six years old. The record further shows that he was born in Mexico, married the applicant in Mexico, and that two of the couple's children were born in Mexico. [redacted] does not claim that he suffers from any medical or mental health condition that would make his readjustment to living in Mexico any more difficult than would normally be expected. With respect to the applicant's contention that [redacted] must remain in the United States to work because of the economic situation in Mexico, there is no evidence in the record to support this contention. In addition, the record does not show that this hardship would be extreme or that their situation is unique or atypical compared to other individuals in similar circumstances. *See Perez v. INS, supra* (defining extreme hardship as hardship that was unusual or beyond that which would normally be expected upon deportation).

A review of the documentation in the record fails to establish the existence of extreme hardship to the applicant's husband caused by the applicant's inadmissibility to the United States. Having found the applicant statutorily ineligible for relief, no purpose would be served in discussing whether she merits a waiver as a matter of discretion.

In proceedings for application for waiver of grounds of inadmissibility under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act, the burden of proving eligibility 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.