

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 3, 2023

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Ave NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Director Jaddou,

We are concerned about the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recent proposed rule entitled, "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Require Requirements," which outlines a massive increase in fees for traveling artists, including touring musicians. We urge you not to move forward with the proposed 260 and 251 percent increase in fees for O and P visas respectively, which would have a devastating impact on our local creative economies.

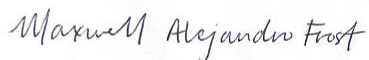
Arts and cultural organizations, artists, venues, and the wider creative sector are not only vital to local economies across the United States but contribute to the growth and wellbeing of our communities. Despite being anchors institutions and that contribute greatly to their communities, most arts entities operate on very slim margins. As the arts economy works to recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued high costs, delays, and unpredictability of visa processing has contributed to a difficult recovery for the sector.

The proposed rule would increase petition fees for O visas from \$460 to \$1,655 and for P visas from \$460 to \$1,615 per request. We, alongside thousands of artists and arts organizations who have raised their voice on in opposition to the proposal, know that fee increases of this magnitude would devastate local arts organizations and make it impossible for them to engage with international artists.

We understand that your stated intention is to use the increased revenue to, "fund operating costs associated with administering nation's legal immigration system." We strongly support the shared priority of addressing asylum caseloads, backlog reduction, and refugee processing. We understand that an increase in fees may be necessary, but we reject this false choice that increasing that cost of accessing music and culture is the only way to decrease the backlog. Further, implementing this dramatic fee increase would result in a sharp decline in artists seeking visas, which could leave the same immigration programs unfunded all over again. We urge you to reconsider these dramatic fee increases directed at O and P visas and to instead diversify your revenue source to fund important activities to support our nation's immigrants.

Many arts entities are concerned that their ability to afford these fees has been significantly overestimated in the proposed rule and are alarmed at the prospect of visa fees more than tripling in size. We urge you to reconsider. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



Daniel S. Goldman  
Member of Congress



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



Nydia Velazquez  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

March 27, 2023

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

Dear Representative Frost:

Thank you for your March 3, 2023 letter regarding to reconsider on the proposed fee increases for O and P visas.

Thank you for your interest in the January 4, 2023 proposed fee rule. We appreciate your statements about the cultural and economic importance of artists and arts organizations and your concerns about the impact of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) fees on these stakeholders.

USCIS fee structures are set to ensure we fully recover all of the agency's costs. As you know, USCIS is primarily fee funded with 96% of our budget covered by fees. At the same time, USCIS administers certain immigration benefits without collecting a fee (e.g. refugee and asylum processing, as well as fee waivers for those economically disadvantaged and certain victims, etc.). To cover the costs of doing this important work to support the nation's ideals, the vast majority unappropriated by Congress, USCIS must charge other fee-paying applicants and petitioners. In an effort to reduce the need for large fee increases, the President's FY 2024 budget request for USCIS seeks appropriated funding to support the processing of refugee and asylum applications, as well as backlog reduction and other key priorities.

Your input regarding O and P visa fees in the proposed fee rule is very important to us. The public comment period ended on March 13, 2023, and USCIS will carefully review all public comments as we draft a final fee rule.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director