

# United States Senate

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Ur Mendoza Jaddou  
Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)  
5900 Capital Gateway Drive  
Camp Springs, Maryland  
20746

Dear Director Jaddou,

I am writing to inform you of an issue with the automated telephone answering system for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This answering system threatens to hang up on callers that ask to speak to an agent. I suggest USCIS consider offering human assistance upon request, and that USCIS immediately make changes to its operating system to improve customer service.

The 800-375-5283 number is listed as the primary phone contact for USCIS and is listed under the "Live Assistance" section of the Contact Us page of the USCIS website. Therefore, anyone hoping to contact USCIS via phone will call this number and reach this automated answering system. My staff called this number on behalf of a constituent after the constituent was unable to connect with an agent on the phone. When my staff called this number and requested to speak to an agent, the automated system threatened to disconnect the call.

It is unacceptable for an automated answering system to threaten to hang up when a caller makes a simple request to speak with an agent. Every caller deserves to be treated with respect and any technology employed to assist callers should be helpful, not rude and unconstructive.

I request that USCIS immediately remove this response from its automated telephone answering system and work to improve personalized customer service. Thank you for your swift resolution of this issue.

Sincerely,



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



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

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Dan Sullivan  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sullivan:

Thank you for your January 17, 2024 letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regarding the USCIS Contact Center automated telephone answering system.

The Contact Center receives an average of 60,000 calls to the 1-800 number per day. Of those, USCIS escalates approximately 15,000 to 20,000 calls (25 to 30 percent of all calls) to live assistance based on caller-stated reasons. USCIS offers an average of 3,000 to 4,000 live chats per day, escalated through the online virtual assistant, Emma. In addition, USCIS offers a wealth of information online, including several enhanced online customer experience self-service tools implemented in Fiscal Year 2023. These tools include online rescheduling of biometric appointments,<sup>1</sup> online requests for appointments at field offices,<sup>2</sup> and a new change of address tool<sup>3</sup> that allows most customers to update their address through their USCIS online account. Many customers can also access case-specific information within their USCIS online accounts via [my.uscis.gov](https://my.uscis.gov).

USCIS previously employed a touch-tone Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. To increase effectiveness, in May 2020, USCIS transitioned to a speech-enabled IVR that requires callers seeking live assistance to provide information about their inquiry before the system can connect them to live assistance. For those who do not need live assistance, the IVR provides email and text responses with links to information on the USCIS website. Initially, the speech-enabled IVR allowed callers to connect to a live agent by simply stating “agent” or “representative.” This resulted in an unmanageable number of calls being queued for live assistance, with callers waiting for up to an hour to speak to an agent, when the information they were requesting could have been made through online resources. As such, USCIS no longer allows callers to connect to live assistance by simply stating “agent” or “representative.”

The IVR currently provides callers three opportunities to state their reason for needing live assistance before the call is disconnected. Based on customer feedback, USCIS is revising the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/uscis-launches-online-rescheduling-of-biometrics-appointments>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/uscis-launches-online-appointment-request-form>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/uscis-launches-new-online-change-of-address-tool>

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language to explain to the customer that a live call transfer is not available but we are able to connect them with a live agent via chat or secure message. Both of these options allow a customer to engage with a USCIS Contact Center representative. We expect to have this new feature available this fiscal year.

USCIS welcomes the opportunity to brief you and your staff to provide more information about how our speech-enabled IVR works and would also be happy to provide information on our current menu of customer service and customer experience tools, and those planned for future deployment.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this matter. If you would like to receive a briefing on the USCIS Contact Center and our online tools, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

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

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director