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U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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FILE: WAC 08 143 53753 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: SEP 30 2008

IN RE: Petitioner: [Redacted]  
Beneficiary: [Redacted]

PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



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, Chief  
Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The Director, California Service Center, denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner provides packaging and "POP" manufacturing services. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a computer systems engineer. The petitioner, therefore, endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The 2008 fiscal-year cap for the issuance of H-1B visas, set by section 214(g)(1)(A) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(g)(1)(A), was reached on April 2, 2007. Although the petitioner filed the Form I-129 petition on April 14, 2007, the petition was accepted and adjudicated because the petitioner indicated on the Form I-129 that the beneficiary met the cap exemption criterion at section 214(g)(5)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(g)(5)(C), as a beneficiary who, in the words of the Act, "has earned a master's or higher degree from a United States institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a))."

The director denied the petition on the basis that the beneficiary did not meet the requirements specified in section 214(g)(5)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(g)(5)(C), and thus the beneficiary was subject to the annual cap. The director noted that the evidence of record showed that the beneficiary had not been awarded a master's degree by a United States institute of higher learning when the petition was filed.

On appeal, counsel for the petitioner asserts that the beneficiary had completed all the requirements for the master's degree prior to April 24, 2008 and that only formalities remained. Counsel contends that there is no express requirement that a degree must have been earned when the petition is filed, but that the degree must have been earned before the visa may be issued. Counsel notes that the beneficiary's last semester of her master's program ended April 24, 2008 and that her assignments and exams had been completed by that date. Counsel avers that the director's decision on May 27, 2008 was after the beneficiary had completed all the requirements of the master's degree and had earned the master's degree as of the date of the director's decision. Counsel submits a photocopy of a document on the letterhead of the University of Michigan dated May 7, 2008 certifying that the beneficiary had completed all academic requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Information and would "be so recommended to the Board of Regents when they consider degrees to be conferred as of April 28, 2008."

The AAO bases its decision upon its consideration of all of the evidence in the record of proceeding, including: (1) the petitioner's Form I-129 (Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker) filed April 14, 2008 and the supporting documentation filed with it; (2) the director's May 27, 2008 denial letter; and (3) counsel's Form I-290B and supporting documentation.

Section 214(g)(5)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(g)(5)(C) as modified by the American Competitiveness in the Twenty-first Century Act (AC21), Pub. L. No. 106-313 (October 17, 2000), states, in relevant part, that the H-1B cap shall not apply to any nonimmigrant alien issued a visa or otherwise provided status under section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act who "has earned a master's or higher degree from a United States

institution of higher education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)) until the number of aliens who are exempted from such numerical limitation during such year exceeds 20,000."

The evidence presented by the petitioner does not establish that the beneficiary had been issued a master's degree from the University of Michigan, when the Form I-129 petition was filed. The petitioner submitted a letter dated February 4, 2008 signed by the Senior Academic Advisor, School of Information at the University of Michigan that indicated that the beneficiary is at the final stage of her program and is expected to complete her master's program by April 30, 2008. Thus, when the petition was filed on April 14, 2008, the evidence of record did not substantiate that the beneficiary had earned a master's degree. The AAO disagrees with counsel's implicit assertion that the expectation of completion of a degree is sufficient to establish that the beneficiary has earned a degree; rather such an expectation is speculative. CIS regulations affirmatively require a petitioner to establish eligibility for the benefit it is seeking at the time the petition is filed. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(12). A visa petition may not be approved at a future date after the petitioner or the beneficiary becomes eligible under a new set of facts. *Matter of Michelin Tire Corp.*, 17 I&N Dec. 248 (Reg. Comm. 1978). The document submitted on appeal confirms that the beneficiary will be recommended to the Board of Regents for the conferral of the master's degree; but the record does not include the diploma issued. 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)).

The AAO finds that the evidence of record does not establish that the beneficiary is exempt from the H-1B visa cap under the requirements of section 214(g)(5)(C) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(g)(5)(C) because the beneficiary had not yet earned a master's degree at the time that the petition was filed. Accordingly, the AAO will not disturb the director's denial of the petition.

As always, the burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.