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FILE: WAC 07 058 50916 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date:

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: SELF-REPRESENTED

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.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. Please refer to 8 C.F.R. § 103.5 for the specific requirements. 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 \$585. Any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen, as required by 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i).

John F. Grissom,
Acting Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director of the California Service Center denied the petition, and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The AAO will affirm the director's decision and deny the petition.

The petitioner filed this nonimmigrant petition seeking to employ the beneficiary in the position of "principal consultant " as an H-1B nonimmigrant 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 petitioner describes itself as a software consultancy firm and indicates that it currently employs two persons.

The director denied the petition based on the petitioner's failure to establish that it meets the regulatory definition of an intending United States employer. Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Specifically, the director noted that since the beneficiary was a manager-member of the petitioning entity, the petition constituted a self-petition by the beneficiary and therefore did not meet the regulatory requirements of an employer.

On appeal, the petitioner submits a two-page letter addressing the issues raised by the director in the denial. The petitioner submits no new evidence to refute the director's findings or to support its contentions on appeal.

The primary issue in the present matter is whether the petitioner has established that it meets the regulatory definition of an intending United States employer. Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Specifically, the AAO must determine whether the petitioner has established that it will have "an employee-employer relationship with respect to employees under this part, as indicated by the fact that it may hire, pay, fire, supervise, or otherwise control the work of any such employee." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii)(2).

Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b), defines H-1B nonimmigrants as an alien:

(i) who is coming temporarily to the United States to perform services . . . in a specialty occupation described in section 1184(i)(1) . . ., who meets the requirements of the occupation specified in section 1184(i)(2) . . ., and with respect to whom the Secretary of Labor determines . . . that the intending employer has filed with the Secretary an application under 1182(n)(1).

"United States employer" is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) as follows:

United States employer means a person, firm, corporation, contractor, or other association, or organization in the United States which:

- (1) Engages a person to work within the United States;

- (2) Has an employer-employee relationship with respect to employees under this part, as indicated by the fact that it may hire, pay, fire, supervise, or otherwise control the work of any such employee; and
- (3) Has an Internal Revenue Service Tax identification number.

Upon review, the AAO concurs with the director's decision. The record is not persuasive in establishing that the petitioner will have an employer-employee relationship with the beneficiary. Applying the tests mandated by the Supreme Court of the United States for construing the terms "employee" and "employer-employee relationship" in *Nationwide Mutual Ins. Co. v. Darden*, 503 U.S. 318, 322-323 (1992); *Clackamas Gastroenterology Associates, P.C. v. Wells*, 538 U.S. 440 (2003), the record is not persuasive in establishing that the beneficiary will be an "employee" of the petitioner as a co-manager, member and president of the petitioner. Based on the two-person composition of the petitioner and the apparent co-ownership and control of the company, the directly correctly concluded that the beneficiary could not reasonably be hired, paid, fired, supervised or otherwise controlled by any other employee or by himself.

Although "United States employer" is defined in the regulations, it is noted that "employee," "employed," "employment," and "employer-employee relationship" are not defined for purposes of the H-1B visa classification even though these terms are used repeatedly in both the Act and the regulations, including within the definition of "United States employer" at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act indicates that an alien coming to the United States to perform services in a specialty occupation will have an "intending employer" who will file a labor condition application with the Secretary of Labor pursuant to section 212(n)(1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(n)(1). The intending employer is described as offering full-time or part-time "employment" to the H-1B "employee." Sections 212(n)(1)(A)(i) and 212(n)(2)(C)(vii) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182(n)(1)(A)(i) and 1182(n)(2)(C)(vii). Further, the regulations indicate that "United States employers" must file Form I-129 in order to classify aliens as H-1B temporary "employees." 8 C.F.R. §§ 214.2(h)(1) and 214.2(h)(2)(i)(A).. Finally, the definition of "United States employer" indicates in its second prong that the petitioner must have an "employer-employee relationship" with the "employees under this part," i.e., the H-1B beneficiary, and that this relationship be evidenced by the employer's ability to "hire, pay, fire, supervise, or otherwise control the work of any such employee." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) (defining the term "United States employer"). Accordingly, neither the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) nor U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has defined the terms "employee," "employed," "employment," or "employer-employee relationship" by regulation for purposes of the H-1B visa classification, even though the law describes H-1B beneficiaries as being "employees" who must have an "employer-employee relationship" with a "United States employer."¹ Therefore, for purposes of the H-1B visa classification, these terms are undefined.

¹ It is noted that, in certain limited circumstances, a petitioner might not necessarily be the "employer" of an H-1B beneficiary. Under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(F), it is possible for an "agent" who will not be the actual "employer" of the H-1B temporary employee to file a petition on behalf of the actual employer and the beneficiary. However, the regulations clearly require H-1B beneficiaries of "agent" petitions to still be employed by "employers," who are required by regulation to have "employer-employee relationships" with respect to these H-1B "employees." *See id.*; 8 C.F.R. §§ 214.2(h)(1) and 214.2(h)(4)(ii) (defining the term "United States employer"). As such, the requirement that a beneficiary have a United States employer applies

The Supreme Court of the United States has determined that where federal law fails to clearly define the term "employee," courts should conclude that the term was "intended to describe the conventional master-servant relationship as understood by common-law agency doctrine." *Nationwide Mutual Ins. Co. v. Darden*, 503 U.S. 318, 322-323 (1992) (hereinafter "*Darden*") (quoting *Community for Creative Non-Violence v. Reid*, 490 U.S. 730 (1989)). That definition is as follows:

In determining whether a hired party is an employee under the general common law of agency, we consider the hiring party's right to control the manner and means by which the product is accomplished. Among the other factors relevant to this inquiry are the skill required; the source of the instrumentalities and tools; the location of the work; the duration of the relationship between the parties; whether the hiring party has the right to assign additional projects to the hired party; the extent of the hired party's discretion over when and how long to work; the method of payment; the hired party's role in hiring and paying assistants; whether the work is part of the regular business of the hiring party; whether the hiring party is in business; the provision of employee benefits; and the tax treatment of the hired party.

Darden, 503 U.S. at 323-324; see also *Restatement (Second) of Agency* § 220(2) (1958); *Clackamas Gastroenterology Associates, P.C. v. Wells*, 538 U.S. 440 (2003) (hereinafter "*Clackamas*"). As the common-law test contains "no shorthand formula or magic phrase that can be applied to find the answer, . . . all of the incidents of the relationship must be assessed and weighed with no one factor being decisive." *Darden*, 503 U.S. at 324 (quoting *NLRB v. United Ins. Co. of America*, 390 U.S. 254, 258 (1968)).²

equally to single petitioning employers as well as multiple non-petitioning employers represented by "agents" under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(F). The only difference is that the ultimate, non-petitioning employers of the H-1B employees in these scenarios do not directly file petitions.

² While the *Darden* court considered only the definition of "employee" under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 ("ERISA"), 29 U.S.C. § 1002(6), and did not address the definition of "employer," courts have generally refused to extend the common law agency definition to ERISA's use of employer because "the definition of 'employer' in ERISA, unlike the definition of 'employee,' clearly indicates legislative intent to extend the definition beyond the traditional common law definition." See, e.g., *Bowers v. Andrew Weir Shipping, Ltd.*, 810 F. Supp. 522 (S.D.N.Y. 1992), *aff'd*, 27 F.3d 800 (2nd Cir. 1994), *cert. denied*, 513 U.S. 1000 (1994). However, in this matter, the Act does not exhibit a legislative intent to extend the definition of "employer" in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act, "employment" in section 212(n)(1)(A)(i) of the Act, or "employee" in section 212(n)(2)(C)(vii) of the Act beyond the traditional common law definitions. Instead, in the context of the H-1B visa classification, the term "United States employer" was defined in the regulations to be even more restrictive than the common law agency definition. A federal agency's interpretation of a statute whose administration is entrusted to it is to be accepted unless Congress has spoken directly on the issue. See *Chevron, U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 844-45 (1984).

The regulatory definition of "United States employer" requires H-1B employers to have a tax identification number, to employ persons in the United States, *and* to have an "employer-employee relationship" with the

It should be noted that the legacy INS, in the past, has considered the employment of principal stockholders by petitioning business entities in the context of employment-based nonimmigrant classifications, specifically the L-1A intracompany transferee classification. However, these precedent decisions predate the Supreme Court's *Darden* decision and can be distinguished from the present matter. The decisions in *Matter of Aphrodite Investments Limited*, 17 I&N Dec. 530 (Comm. 1980) (hereinafter *Aphrodite*) and *Matter of Allan Gee, Inc.*, 17 I&N Dec. 296 (Reg. Comm. 1979) (hereinafter *Allan Gee*), both primarily addressed the ability of corporate entities to file petitions on behalf of beneficiaries who have substantial ownership stakes in those entities. The soundness of this particular conclusion is not being questioned and is not at issue in the present matter. However, these decisions fail to directly address how, or whether, H-1B petitioners must establish that beneficiaries are bona fide "employees" of "United States employers" having an "employer-employee relationship."

As explained above, the *Darden* decision indicates that where the term "employee" is undefined, courts should conclude "that Congress intended to describe the conventional master-servant relationship as

H-1B "employee." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Accordingly, the term "United States employer" not only requires H-1B employers and employees to have an "employer-employee relationship" as understood by common-law agency doctrine, it imposes additional requirements, thus indicating that the regulations do not indicate an intent to extend the definition beyond "the traditional common law definition." Therefore, in the absence of an intent to impose broader definitions by either Congress or USCIS, the "conventional master-servant relationship as understood by common-law agency doctrine," and the *Darden* construction test, apply to the terms "employee," "employer-employee relationship," "employed," and "employment" as used in section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act, section 212(n) of the Act, and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h). That being said, there are instances in the Act where Congress may have intended a broader application of the term "employer" than what is encompassed in the conventional master-servant relationship. *See, e.g.*, section 214(c)(2)(F) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(c)(2)(F) (referring to "unaffiliated employers" supervising and controlling L-1B intracompany transferees having specialized knowledge); section 274A of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1324a (referring to the employment of unauthorized aliens).

Finally, it is also noted that, if the statute and the regulations were somehow read as extending the definition of employee in the H-1B context beyond the traditional common law definition, this interpretation would likely thwart congressional design and lead to an absurd result when considering the \$750/\$1,500 fee imposed on H-1B employers under section 214(c)(9) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(c)(9). As 20 C.F.R. § 655.731(c)(10)(ii) mandates that no part of the fee imposed under section 214(c)(9) of the Act shall be paid, "directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntarily," by the beneficiary, it would not appear possible to comply with this provision in a situation in which the beneficiary is his or her own employer, especially where the requisite "control" over the beneficiary has not been established by the petitioner.

⁵ The director also noted that the petitioner appears to interchangeably use two addresses for its business, one of which has been verified as an apartment complex. No independent evidence clearly establishing the petitioner's valid business address has been submitted.

understood by common-law agency doctrine." *Darden*, 503 U.S. at 322-323. As indicated above, the Act and regulations fail to define the terms "employee," "employed," "employment," and "employer-employee relationship" for purposes of the H-1B visa classification. Therefore, while a petitioner, which is solely or primarily owned by a beneficiary, *may* file a petition for that beneficiary as an L-1A intracompany transferee or H-1B temporary employee, the question of whether such a beneficiary will truly be an "employee" as required by law is a separate and independent matter which will be scrutinized on a case-by-case basis utilizing the analysis set forth by the Supreme Court in *Darden*, 503 U.S. at 323-324, and *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 449-450.

In other words, while an H-1B petitioner may file a petition for a beneficiary who is its sole or primary owner, this does not necessarily mean that the beneficiary will be a bona fide "employee" employed by a "United States employer" in an "employer-employee relationship." See *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. 440. In fact, courts employing this analysis in considering whether an owner of an "employer" is also an "employee" in an "employer-employee relationship" have concluded, in certain contexts, that the owner is not an "employee." See, e.g., *Ziegler v. Anesthesia Associates of Lancaster, Ltd.*, 74 Fed. Appx. 197, 2003 WL 22048003 (3rd Cir. 2003) (unpublished); *Solon v. Kaplan*, 398 F.3d 629 (7th Cir. 2005).

Therefore, in considering whether or not one is an "employee" in an "employer-employee relationship" with a "United States employer" for purposes of H-1B nonimmigrant petitions, USCIS will focus on the common-law touchstone of control. *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 450. Factors indicating that a worker is an "employee" of an "employer" are clearly delineated in both the *Darden* and *Clackamas* decisions. 503 U.S. at 323-324; see also *Restatement (Second) of Agency* § 220(2) (1958). Such indicia of control include when, where, and how a worker performs the job; the continuity of the worker's relationship with the employer; the tax treatment of the worker; the provision of employee benefits; and whether the work performed by the worker is part of the employer's regular business. See *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 448-449; cf. *New Compliance Manual*, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, § 2-III(A)(1), (EEOC 2006) (adopting a materially identical test and indicating that said test was based on the *Darden* decision); see also *Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384, 388 (5th Cir. 2000) (determining that hospitals, as the recipients of beneficiaries' services, are the true "employers" of H-1B nurses under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h), even though a medical contract service agency is the actual petitioner, because the hospitals ultimately hire, pay, fire, supervise, or otherwise control the work of the beneficiaries).

It is important to note that the factors listed in *Darden* and *Clackamas* are not exhaustive and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Other aspects of the relationship between the parties may affect the determination of whether an employer-employee relationship exists. Furthermore, not all or even a majority of the listed criteria need be met; however, the fact finder must weigh and compare a combination of the factors in analyzing the facts of each individual case. The determination must be based on all of the circumstances in the relationship between the parties, regardless of whether the parties refer to it as an employee or as an independent contractor relationship. See *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 448-449; *New Compliance Manual* at § 2-III(A)(1).

Within the context of H-1B nonimmigrant petitions, when a worker is also a partner, officer, member of a board of directors, or a major shareholder, the worker may only be defined as an "employee" having an "employer-employee relationship" with a "United States employer" if he or she is subject to the organization's

"control." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii)(2); *see also Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 449-450; *New Compliance Manual* at § 2-III(A)(1)(d). Factors to be addressed in determining whether a worker, who is also an owner of the organization, is an employee include:

- Whether the organization can hire or fire the individual or set the rules and regulations of the individual's work.
- Whether and, if so, to what extent the organization supervises the individual's work.
- Whether the individual reports to someone higher in the organization.
- Whether and, if so, to what extent the individual is able to influence the organization.
- Whether the parties intended that the individual be an employee, as expressed in written agreements or contracts.
- Whether the individual shares in the profits, losses, and liabilities of the organization.

Clackamas, 538 U.S. at 449-450 (citing *New Compliance Manual*).

Again, it is important to note that this list need not be exhaustive and such questions cannot be decided in every case by a "shorthand formula or magic phrase." *Id.* at 450 (citing *Darden*, 503 U.S. at 324). Moreover, in applying the above test, the mere fact that a "person has a particular title – such as partner, director, or vice president – should not necessarily be used to determine whether he or she is an employee or a proprietor." *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 450; *cf. Matter of Church Scientology International*, 19 I&N Dec. 593, 604 (Comm. 1988) (stating that a job title alone is not determinative of whether one is employed in an executive or managerial capacity). Likewise, the "mere existence of a document styled 'employment agreement'" shall not lead inexorably to the conclusion that the worker is an employee. *Clackamas*, 538 U.S. at 450. "Rather, as was true in applying common-law rules to the independent-contractor-versus-employee issue confronted in *Darden*, the answer to whether a shareholder-director is an employee depends on 'all of the incidents of the relationship . . . with no one factor being decisive.'" *Id.* at 451 (quoting *Darden*, 503 U.S. at 324).

Applying the *Darden* and *Clackamas* tests to this matter, the petitioner has not established that it will be a "United States employer" having an "employer-employee relationship" with the beneficiary as an H-1B temporary "employee." As explained above, the petitioner purports to be a limited liability company comprised of two persons, one of which is the beneficiary, who also serves as president. In response to a notice of intent to deny, issued by the director on February 1, 2007, the petitioner submitted a number of corporate documents to support its contention that the beneficiary was not a member-manager of the company. The petitioner submitted a copy of its board meeting minutes dated March 1, 2004, which indicate that the beneficiary is a board member. The minutes indicate that [REDACTED] joined the company as a new member and will serve as president and CEO. However, the petitioner also submitted a copy of its Statement of Information, filed with the California Secretary of State on June 21, 2004, which indicates that the beneficiary, not [REDACTED] is the CEO of the company.

Additionally, the petitioner submitted a letter from the beneficiary to [REDACTED] dated June 22 2004, which offers his resignation from the position of CEO/Secretary of the petitioner. The petitioner further submits a copy of its board meeting minutes dated June 22, 2004 which verify the beneficiary's resignation. Finally, the petitioner submitted an updated Statement of Information, signed by [REDACTED] on January 4, 2005, which indicates that [REDACTED] is the CEO and sole member of the company.

The director found these documents insufficient to establish that the beneficiary is not a member or owner of the petitioner. The AAO concurs. The documents submitted have no accompanying verification, such as a date stamp or filing receipt, to demonstrate that they were actually filed with the Secretary of State of California. The only document that has proof of filing is the first Statement of Information filed on June 21, 2004, which indicates that the beneficiary is the CEO and a member of the company. Absent independent evidence or verification that such documentation was actually filed and accepted by the Secretary of State of California, the AAO finds that the record supports a finding that the beneficiary is the CEO and a member-manager of the petitioner. Doubt cast on any aspect of the petitioner's proof may, of course, lead to a reevaluation of the reliability and sufficiency of the remaining evidence offered in support of the visa petition. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591 (BIA 1988). If USCIS fails to believe that a fact stated in the petition is true, CIS may reject that fact. Section 204(b) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1154(b); *see also Anetekhai v. I.N.S.*, 876 F.2d 1218, 1220 (5th Cir.1989); *Lu-Ann Bakery Shop, Inc. v. Nelson*, 705 F. Supp. 7, 10 (D.D.C.1988); *Systronics Corp. v. INS*, 153 F. Supp. 2d 7, 15 (D.D.C. 2001).

On appeal, the petitioner simply contends that the beneficiary has not been a member of the petitioning entity since June 2004, and sold his ownership to [REDACTED] at that time. The petitioner resubmits the June 21, 2004 resignation letter and the June 22, 2004 meeting minutes in support of these contentions.

The petitioner's assertions, however, are not acceptable. The director noted in the appeal that the service was unable to verify that the documentation referred to above was actually filed and recorded with the Secretary of State. Although notified of this deficiency in the denial letter, the petitioner resubmits the same documentation previously determined by the director to be unacceptable. Moreover, the assertion that the beneficiary sold his ownership interests to [REDACTED] in June of 2004 is not supported by any financial records, nor does the petitioner submit copies of its membership certificates or company ledger evidencing this transfer of ownership. 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)).

Moreover, USCIS records indicate that on August 17, 2004, the petitioner filed a petition for nonimmigrant worker on behalf of [REDACTED] in care of the beneficiary. However, if the beneficiary resigned from the company on June 22, 2004 as the petitioner claims, then the filing of this petition under the beneficiary's direction casts further doubt upon the petitioner's claims. It is incumbent upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence.⁵ Any attempt to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies will not suffice unless the petitioner submits competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. at 591-92.

Although the petitioner submits a copy of an employment agreement between the petitioner and the beneficiary, signed on September 10, 2006, the document carries little weight in light of the above. In fact, it

casts more doubt upon the petitioner's claims. According to this agreement, the petitioner offers the beneficiary a salary of \$8,750 per month, or \$105,000 annually. However, on Form I-129, the petitioner indicates that its gross annual income is \$106,685. Again, it is incumbent upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. at 591-92.

When asked to explain how it could feasibly remunerate the beneficiary, the petitioner claimed that it had a new contract that would bring in additional revenue. Although a copy of this contract between the petitioner and Applied Materials was submitted, the director noted that it was dated January 2005. It is unclear how a contract, entered into by the petitioner more than one year prior to the petition's filing, would rapidly increase the petitioner's revenue in order to pay the beneficiary's proposed salary. This is particularly questionable since the petitioner's gross revenue in the year following the contract's execution amounted to only \$106,685.

Therefore, despite the documentary evidence submitted, it appears that the beneficiary will be a proprietor of this business and will not be an "employee" having an "employer-employee relationship" with a "United States employer." It has not been established that the beneficiary will be "controlled" by the petitioner or that the beneficiary's employment could be terminated. As president and CEO, he will control the organization; he cannot be fired; he will report to no one; he will set the rules governing his work; and he will share in all profits and losses. Moreover, there is no evidence in the record to support a finding that the petitioner has the financial ability to pay the beneficiary's proposed salary as contemplated by the employment agreement. Therefore, based on the tests outlined above, the petitioner has not established that it will be a "United States employer" having an "employer-employee relationship" with the beneficiary as an H-1B temporary "employee." 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii).

Accordingly, the petitioner and the beneficiary are not eligible for the benefit sought, and the petition is denied.

In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has not been met. Accordingly, the director's decision will be affirmed and the petition will be denied.

ORDER: The director's decision is affirmed. The petition is denied.