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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of Administrative Appeals MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



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

[REDACTED]

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FILE:

[REDACTED]

Office:

[REDACTED]

Date: **AUG 24 2010**

(CDJ 1998 641 003)

IN RE:

[REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility under section 212(i) of the
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(i)

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.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

of United States citizens
to the United States
to the United States

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

The applicant is a native and citizen of Mexico who was found to be inadmissible under section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(C)(i), for having sought admission to the United States through fraud or misrepresentation of a material fact. The applicant is married to a Lawful Permanent Resident and is the beneficiary of an approved Petition for Alien Relative. She seeks a waiver of inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(i), in order to return to the United States and reside with her husband.

The district director concluded that the applicant failed to establish that extreme hardship would be imposed on a qualifying relative and denied the application accordingly. *See Decision of the District Director* dated March 4, 2008.

On appeal, counsel for the applicant asserts that the applicant's husband is suffering extreme emotional hardship due to being separated from the applicant and has been prescribed antidepressant medication to treat anxiety and depression. *See Counsel's Brief in Support of Appeal* at 1-2. Counsel further states that the applicant would suffer hardship if he relocated to Mexico with the applicant because he has resided in the United States for over thirty years, would lose his employment and be separated from his family members, and would be subject to poor conditions and human rights violations in Mexico. *Brief* at 3. In support of the appeal counsel submitted affidavits from the applicant's husband and other relatives, a letter from the applicant's husband's physician, a letter from the applicant's husband's employer, a copy of a 1998 Income Tax Return, and information on conditions in Mexico. The entire record was reviewed and considered in arriving at a decision on the appeal.

Section 212(a)(6)(C) of the Act provides, in pertinent part:

- (i) Any alien who, by fraud or willfully misrepresenting a material fact, seeks to procure (or has sought to procure or has procured) a visa, other documentation, or admission into the United States or other benefit provided under this Act is inadmissible.

Section 212(i) of the Act provides:

- (1) The [Secretary] may, in the discretion of the [Secretary], waive the application of clause (i) of subsection (a)(6)(C) in the case of an alien who is the spouse, 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 [Secretary] that the refusal of admission to the United States of such immigrant alien would result in extreme hardship to the citizen or lawfully resident spouse or parent of such an alien.



A waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(i) 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-Morales*, 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."

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.



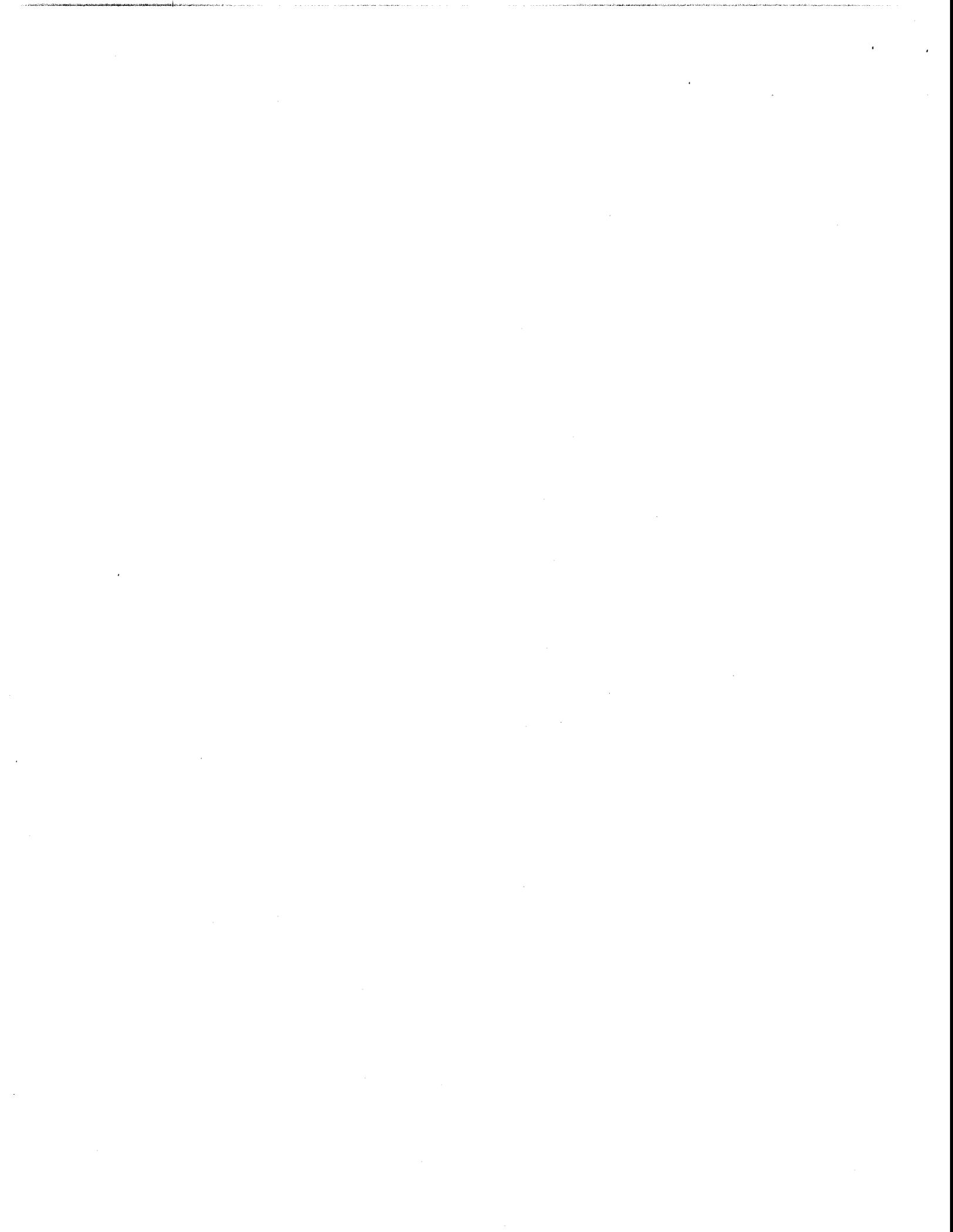
The Board has also held that the common or typical results of deportation, removal and inadmissibility do not constitute extreme hardship, and has listed certain individual hardship factors considered common rather than extreme. These factors include: economic disadvantage, loss of current employment, 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. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (distinguishing *Matter of Puch* 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 the 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) ([REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] 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.

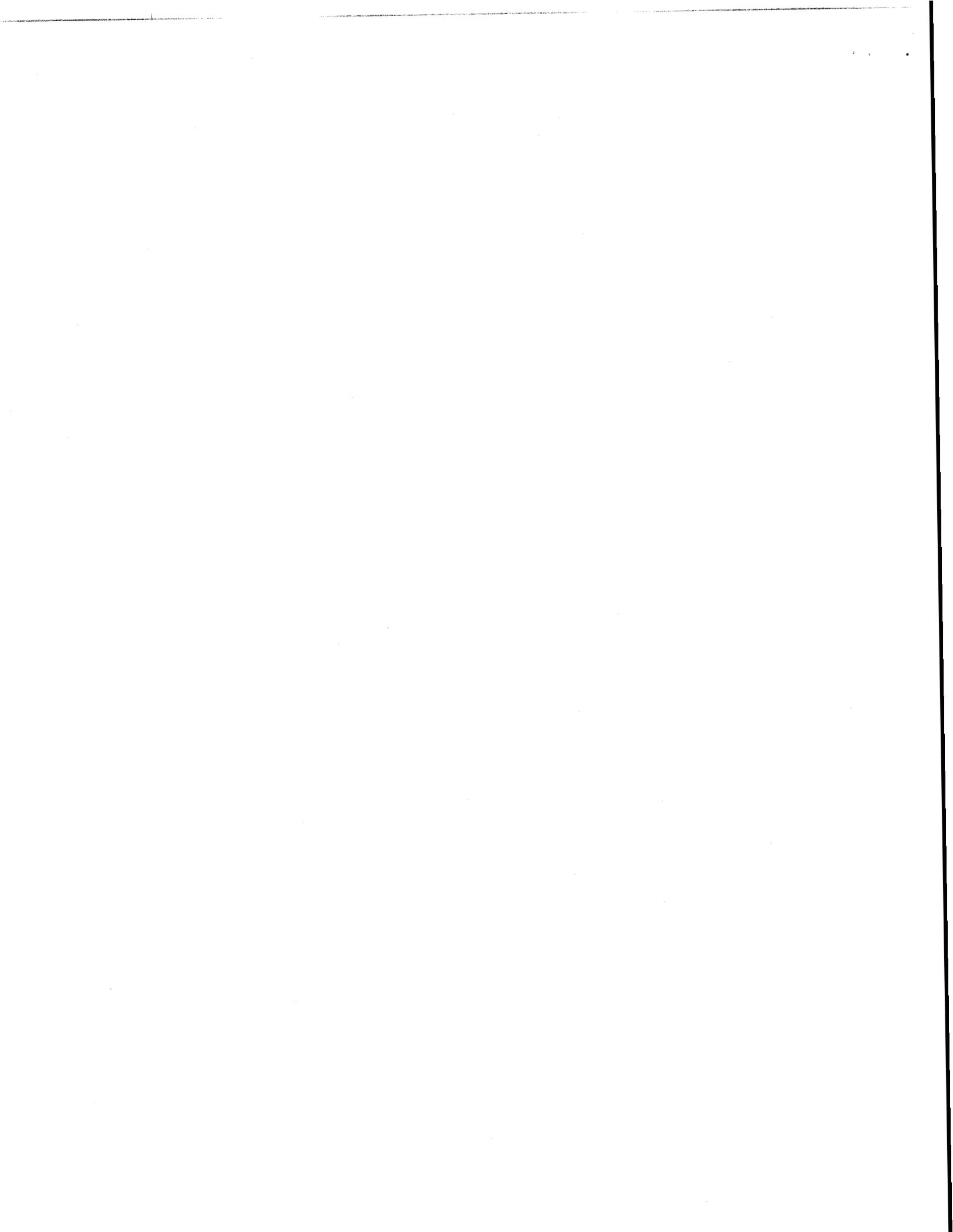
The record reflects that the applicant is a thirty-five year-old native and citizen of Mexico who attempted to procure admission to the United States on February 19, 1997 at El Paso, Texas by presenting a fraudulent permanent resident card. The record further reflects that the applicant’s husband, whom she married on October 24, 1996, is a forty-eight year-old native and citizen of Ecuador and [REDACTED]. The applicant currently resides in [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and her husband resides in North Miami Beach, Florida.

Counsel for the applicant asserts that the applicant’s husband is suffering extreme hardship due to separation from the applicant and has been diagnosed with anxiety and depression. In support of this assertion counsel submitted a letter from the applicant’s husband’s physician stating that he seemed to be suffering from Anxiety Depression and stated that he had been feeling depressed since he was separated from his family. *Letter from* [REDACTED] dated April 3, 2008. [REDACTED] further states,

I have recommended him to seek psychological therapy in order to help him with his Depression. In [the] meantime, I have prescribed Lexapro 10mg daily and Xanax 0.25mg daily.

Letters from the applicant’s husband’s relatives also state that he has seemed very depressed because the applicant is not with him in the United States, and his sister states that she has been very concerned about his health in regard to his separation from his family and that his other children have seen him in a deep depression. *See Letter from* [REDACTED] dated March 2008. The applicant’s husband’s niece states,

It has saddened me that my Uncle in the past couple of years has been spending his time trying to bring his wife, [REDACTED] and two children, [REDACTED] to the United States I have noticed that he has become depressed and losing control of



this problem. We suggested he go see his doctor for counseling or medication to help him with his anxiety and depression.

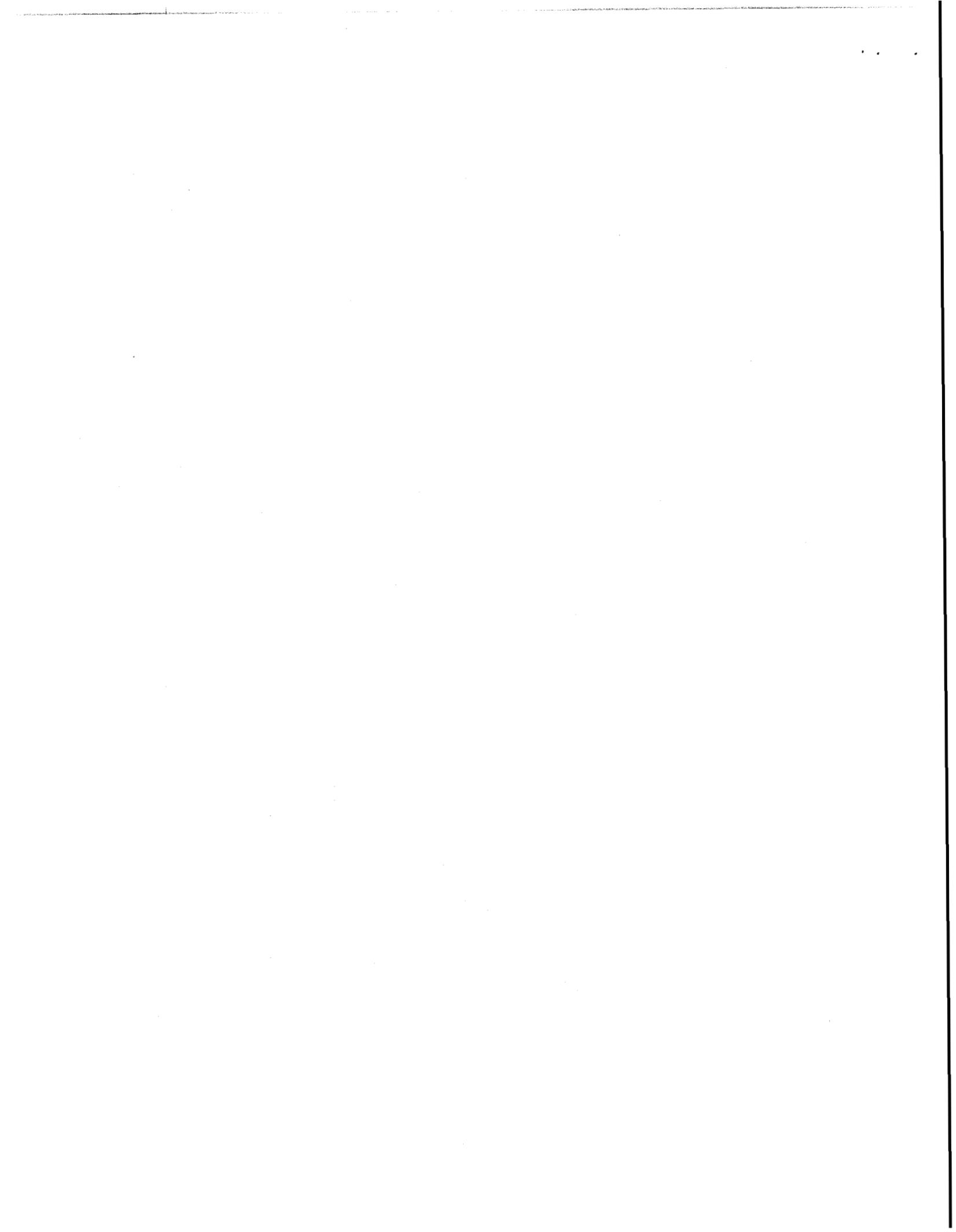
The applicant's husband states that he has been experiencing health problems due to the stress of the situation, including insomnia, anxiety and nervousness, headaches, and dizziness. *Affidavit* dated February 26, 2007.

Upon a complete review of the evidence on the record, the AAO finds that the applicant has established that her husband is experiencing extreme hardship due to their separation, including emotional and psychological hardship. The record indicates that the applicant's husband is suffering from depression and anxiety due to the prospect of permanent separation from the applicant and their two children, and his condition had been observed by various family members, who have recommended he receive treatment. His physician prescribed antidepressant medication and also recommends he receive psychotherapy to address this problem. This hardship resulting from separation from the applicant and their children has also manifested itself in physical symptoms related to the anxiety. These hardships, when combined with the financial hardship of having to support two households and travel to Mexico to visit his family, rise to the level of extreme hardship for the applicant's husband, particularly in light of the prospect of permanent separation pursuant to section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act.

The record further establishes that the applicant's husband would suffer extreme hardship if he relocated to Mexico to reside with the applicant. The applicant's husband has resided in the United States since 1970, when he was eight years old. The record further indicates that he has several close family members residing near him in Florida and has three adult children residing in the United States. As noted above, separation from close family members is a primary concern in assessing extreme hardship. *Salcido-Salcido v. INS*, 138 F.3d 1292, 1293 (9th Cir. 1998). Separation from his family in the United States combined with any difficulty the applicant's husband would have finding employment and adjusting to economic and social conditions in Mexico, where he has never lived and has no ties, would rise to the level of extreme hardship.

The AAO additionally finds that the applicant merits a waiver of inadmissibility as a matter of discretion. In *Matter of Mendez-Morales*, 21 I&N Dec. 296 (BIA 1996), the BIA held that establishing extreme hardship and eligibility for section 212(h)(1)(B) relief does not create an entitlement to that relief, and that extreme hardship, once established, is but one favorable discretionary factor to be considered. In discretionary matters, the alien bears the burden of proving eligibility in terms of equities in the United States which are not outweighed by adverse factors. *See Matter of T-S-Y-*, 7 I&N Dec. 582 (BIA 1957).

In evaluating whether section 212(i) relief is warranted in the exercise of discretion, the factors adverse to the alien include the nature and underlying circumstances of the exclusion ground at issue, the presence of additional significant violations of this country's immigration laws, the existence of a criminal record, and if so, its nature and seriousness, and the presence of other evidence indicative of the alien's bad character or undesirability as a permanent resident of this country. The favorable considerations include family ties in the United States, residence of long



duration in this country (particularly where alien began residency at a young age), evidence of hardship to the alien and his family if he is excluded and deported, service in this country's Armed Forces, a history of stable employment, the existence of property or business ties, evidence of value or service in the community, evidence of genuine rehabilitation if a criminal record exists, and other evidence attesting to the alien's good character (e.g., affidavits from family, friends and responsible community representatives). *Matter of Mendez-Moralez*, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (BIA 1996). The AAO must then "[b]alance the adverse factors evidencing an alien's undesirability as a permanent resident with the social and humane considerations presented on the alien's behalf to determine whether the grant of relief in the exercise of discretion appears to be in the best interests of the country." *Id.* at 300. (Citations omitted).

The adverse factor in the present case is the applicant's attempt to enter the United States by presenting a fraudulent document. The favorable factors in the present case are the extreme hardship to the applicant's husband and the applicant's lack of a criminal record or other immigration violations.

The AAO finds that immigration violation committed by the applicant cannot be condoned. Nevertheless, the AAO finds that taken together, the favorable factors in the present case outweigh the adverse factors, such that a favorable exercise of discretion is warranted. Accordingly, the appeal will be sustained.

ORDER: The appeal is sustained.

