

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



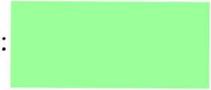
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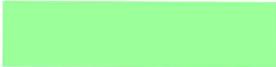
Date: APR 04 2014

Office: BLOOMINGTON

FILE:



IN RE:



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:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) in your case. This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions.

Thank you,

Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Field Office Director, Bloomington, Minnesota. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be sustained.

The applicant is a native and citizen of Laos who was found to be inadmissible to the United States 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 procured a visa, other documentation, or admission into the United States by fraud or willful misrepresentation. The applicant seeks a waiver of inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(i), in order to reside in the United States with her U.S. citizen spouse.

The field office director concluded that the applicant had failed to establish that extreme hardship would be imposed on a qualifying relative and denied the Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility (Form I-601) accordingly. *Decision of the Field Office Director*, dated July 25, 2013.

On appeal, counsel for the applicant submits the following: a brief; medical and mental health documentation pertaining to the applicant's spouse; a copy of the applicant's Form I-485 denial; biographical documents; medical documents pertaining to [REDACTED] the applicant's step-son; divorce documents pertaining to the applicant's spouse; employment information pertaining to the applicant's spouse; and previously submitted documents. The entire record was reviewed and considered in rendering this decision.

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.

....

- (ii) Waiver authorized. – For provision authorizing waiver of clause (i), see subsection (i).

Section 212(i) of the Act provides:

- (1) The Attorney General [now the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary)] may, in the discretion of the Attorney General [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 Attorney General [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.

In regard to the field office director's finding of inadmissibility, the record establishes that the applicant misrepresented his marital status when he applied for a nonimmigrant visa in July 2005. Specifically, he stated that he was married when in fact he was single at the time. On appeal, counsel maintains that the applicant's misrepresentation of his relationship to [REDACTED] was the product of cultural differences and lack of understanding of the difference between legal and traditional marriages and was not the product of willful or deliberate fraud. *See Brief in Support of Appeal*, dated September 24, 2013.

The principal elements of a misrepresentation that renders an alien inadmissible under section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act are willfulness and materiality. In *Matter of S- and B-C-*, 9 I&N Dec 436 (BIA 1960 AG 1961), the Attorney General established the following test to determine whether a misrepresentation is material:

A misrepresentation . . . is material if either (1) the alien is excludable on the true facts, or (2) the misrepresentation tends to shut off a line of inquiry which is relevant to the alien's eligibility and which might well have resulted in a proper determination that he be excluded. *Id.* at 447.

The Supreme Court has addressed the issue of material misrepresentations in its decision in *Kungys v. United States*, 485 U.S. 759 (1988). In that case, which involved misrepresentations made in the context of naturalization proceedings, the Supreme Court held that the applicant's misrepresentations were material if either the applicant was ineligible on the true facts, or if the misrepresentations had a natural tendency to influence the decision of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. *Id.* at 771.

To establish eligibility for a non-immigrant B1/B2 visa, section 101(a)(15) of the Act states, in pertinent part:

- a. an alien...having a residence in a foreign country which he has no intention of abandoning and who is visiting the United States temporarily for business or temporarily for pleasure.

The U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual further provides:

The applicant must demonstrate permanent employment, meaningful business or financial connections, close family ties, or social or cultural associations, which will indicate a strong inducement to return to the country of origin. *DOS Foreign Affairs Manual*, § 41.31 N. 3.4.

By stating that he was married to Ms. [REDACTED] the applicant led the consular officer to believe that he had close family ties, namely, a wife, in his home country. By failing to disclose that he was single, he cut off a line of inquiry which was relevant to the applicant's request for a visitor visa. The record establishes that the applicant signed the Nonimmigrant Visa Application, under penalty

of perjury, indicating that he was married and even listing a spouse's name. The applicant had the duty and the responsibility to review the form (and obtain translations if anything was not clear to him) prior to submission. As such, the AAO concurs with the field office director that the applicant is inadmissible under section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act, for fraud and/or willful misrepresentation with respect to his nonimmigrant visa application in 2005.

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. The applicant's U.S. citizen spouse is the only qualifying relative in this case. Hardship to the applicant or the children can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to a qualifying relative. 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-Moralez*, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (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." *Matter of Hwang*, 10 I&N Dec. 448, 451 (BIA 1964). 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 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. 627, 632-33 (BIA 1996); *Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. 880, 883 (BIA 1994); *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.*

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. *See, e.g., Matter of Bing Chih Kao and Mei Tsui Lin*, 23 I&N Dec. 45, 51 (BIA 2001) (distinguishing *Matter of Pilch* 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). For example, though family separation has been found to be a common result of inadmissibility or removal, separation from family living in the United States can also be the most important single hardship factor in considering hardship in the aggregate. *See Salcido-Salcido v. I.N.S.*, 138 F.3d 1292, 1293 (9th Cir. 1998). (quoting *Contreras-Buenfil v. INS*, 712 F.2d 401, 403 (9th Cir. 1983)); *but see Matter of Ngai*, 19 I&N Dec. at 247 (separation of spouse and children from applicant not extreme hardship due to conflicting evidence in the record and because applicant and spouse had been voluntarily separated from one another for 28 years). Therefore, we consider the totality of the circumstances in determining whether denial of admission would result in extreme hardship to a qualifying relative.

The applicant’s U.S. citizen spouse asserts that she will suffer emotional and financial hardship were she to remain in the United States while the applicant relocates abroad due to his inadmissibility. In a declaration she explains that she was in an abusive and controlling relationship in the past and the applicant loves, supports and takes care of her and long-term separation from him would cause her hardship. She further asserts that the applicant supports her and her children, and without him, she would experience financial hardship. Finally, the applicant’s spouse states that her husband would be in danger were he to return to Laos and her fears and anxieties about his return are causing her hardship. *See Affidavit of* [REDACTED] dated March 19, 2013. In separate statements, the applicant’s children detail the hardships they and their mother would experience were the applicant to relocate abroad. They outline the role the applicant plays in their daily lives and in the family dynamics.

With respect to the emotional hardship referenced, a letter has been provided from [REDACTED] M.A., Licensed Psychologist. Mr. [REDACTED] explains that he has been treating the applicant’s spouse since 2003 as she is suffering from Major Depressive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Dysthymia, PTSD and Parent-Child Relationship Problems as well as physical ailments remaining from years of physical abuse. Mr. [REDACTED] maintains that since meeting the applicant, the applicant’s spouse is making great progress and should she lose her husband, she would lose her support system and would not be able to run her household or raise the family. Mr. [REDACTED] concludes that there is a strong likelihood of mental health deterioration that will be detrimental to the overall family stability. *See Letter from* [REDACTED] M.A., Licensed Psychologist, [REDACTED] dated September 20, 2013. Extensive records have been submitted by counsel outlining the applicant’s spouse’s mental health treatment since 2004. In addition, the applicant has submitted evidence of his wife’s extensive family obligations, including sole physical custody of the minor children from her previous marriage, one child with the applicant, and multiple grandchildren. Furthermore, counsel has provided evidence of the difficulties of many

of the applicant's spouse's eleven children, including truancy, academic problems and injuries from car accidents requiring lengthy treatments. Finally, evidence has been provided establishing that the applicant is the sole financial provider for the family while his spouse has had to obtain state welfare as she is unable to work due to a permanent disability.

The record reflects that the cumulative effect of the emotional and financial hardship the applicant's spouse would experience due to the applicant's inadmissibility rises to the level of extreme. The AAO thus concludes that were the applicant unable to reside in the United States due to his inadmissibility, the applicant's spouse would suffer extreme hardship if she remains in the United States.

Extreme hardship to a qualifying relative must also be established in the event that he or she accompanies the applicant abroad based on the denial of the applicant's waiver request. Counsel first explains that the applicant's spouse came to the United States as a refugee because she was fleeing violence in Laos and thus, she is unable to return to Laos based on that history. Further, counsel details that the applicant's 12 children reside in the United States and long-term separation from them and her grandchildren would cause the applicant's spouse extreme hardship.

The record establishes that the applicant's spouse's children, ranging in age from the mid-20s to 7 years old, are fully integrated into the United States lifestyle and educational system. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) found that a fifteen-year-old child who lived her entire life in the United States, who was completely integrated into the American lifestyle, and who was not fluent in Chinese, would suffer extreme hardship if she relocated to Taiwan. *Matter of Kao and Lin*, 23 I&N Dec. 45 (BIA 2001). The AAO finds *Matter of Kao and Lin* to be persuasive in this case due to the similar fact pattern. To uproot the applicant's children at this stage of their education and social development and relocate to Laos would constitute extreme hardship to them, and by extension, to the applicant's spouse, the only qualifying relative in this case. In addition, the record reflects that the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse has been residing in the United States for over 25 years. Were she to relocate to Laos to reside with the applicant, she would have to leave her home, her children, her grandchildren, her community and the practitioners familiar with her medical and mental health conditions. It has thus been established that the applicant's spouse would suffer extreme hardship were she to relocate abroad to reside with the applicant due to his inadmissibility.

A review of the documentation in the record, when considered in its totality, reflects that the applicant has established that his U.S. citizen spouse would suffer extreme hardship were the applicant unable to reside in the United States. Accordingly, the AAO finds that the situation presented in this application rises to the level of extreme hardship. However, the grant or denial of the waiver does not turn only on the issue of the meaning of "extreme hardship." It also hinges on the discretion of the Secretary and pursuant to such terms, conditions and procedures as she may by regulations prescribe. 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 . . . 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).

See Matter of Mendez-Moralez, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (BIA 1996). The AAO must then "balance 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 favorable factors in this matter are the extreme hardship the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse and twelve children would face if the applicant were to relocate to Laos, regardless of whether they accompanied the applicant or stayed in the United States, the applicant's community ties, his gainful employment while in the United States, support letters, the payment of taxes and the apparent lack of a criminal record. The unfavorable factors in this matter are the applicant's entry to the United States by fraud or willful misrepresentation and periods of unlawful presence and employment while in the United States.

Although the violations committed by the applicant are serious in nature, the AAO finds that the applicant has established that the favorable factors in her application outweigh the unfavorable factors. Therefore, a favorable exercise of the Secretary's discretion is warranted.

In application proceedings, it is the applicant's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has been met.

ORDER: The appeal is sustained.