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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Office of Administrative Appeals MS 2090  
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U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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FILE: [REDACTED] Office: MEXICO CITY (CIUDAD JUAREZ), MEXICO Date: **AUG 26 2010**  
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IN RE: [REDACTED]

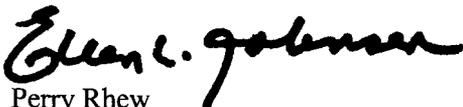
APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility under section 212(a)(9)(B) of the  
Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)

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,

  
Perry Rhew  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

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

The applicant is a native and citizen of Mexico who was found to be inadmissible to the United States pursuant to section 212(a)(9)(B)(i)(II) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i)(II), for having been unlawfully present in the United States for more than one year and again seeking admission within ten years of his last departure from the United States. The applicant is married to a United States citizen. He seeks a waiver of inadmissibility in order to reside in the United States with his family.

In a decision dated January 26, 2008, the Acting District Director found that the applicant failed to establish that his qualifying relative would experience extreme hardship as a consequence his continued inadmissibility. The application was denied accordingly. *See Decision of District Director* dated January 26, 2008.

On appeal, the attorney for the applicant provided a brief detailing several hardships claimed by the applicant's spouse including emotional and financial hardships, as a result of the applicant's inadmissibility.

The record contains Biographic Information (Form G-325A) regarding the applicant, an approved Petition for Alien Relative (Form I-130), an Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility (Form I-601), a Notice of Appeal (Form I-290B), briefs from the applicant's current and prior attorney, two affidavits from the applicant's spouse, an affidavit from the spouse's mother, a psychiatric evaluation of the applicant's spouse, birth certificates for the applicant's children and his stepchild, a birth certificate for the applicant's spouse, their marriage license, the applicant's spouse's earnings statement and documentation of her expenses.

Section 212(a)(9)(B) of the Act provides, in pertinent part:

(B) Aliens Unlawfully Present.-

(i) In general. - Any alien (other than an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence) who-

....

(II) has been unlawfully present in the United States for one year or more, and who again seeks admission within 10 years of the date of such alien's departure or removal from the United States, is inadmissible.

....

(v) Waiver. – The Attorney General [now the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary)] has sole discretion to waive clause (i) in the case of an immigrant who is the spouse or 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 such immigrant alien would result in extreme hardship to the citizen or lawfully resident spouse or parent of such alien.

Section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act provides for a waiver of section 212(a)(9)(B)(i) inadmissibility as follows:

The Attorney General [now Secretary of Homeland Security] has sole discretion to waive clause (i) in the case of an immigrant who is the spouse or son or daughter of a United States citizen or of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, if it is established . . . that the refusal of admission to such immigrant alien would result in extreme hardship to the citizen or lawfully resident spouse or parent of such alien.

A waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) 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 his children can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to a qualifying relative. The applicant's spouse 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." *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 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. See, e.g., *In re 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).

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 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) (██████████ 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 *Cervantes-Gonzalez* 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 applicant’s qualifying relative in this case is his spouse, who is a United States citizen.

The record indicates that the applicant entered the United States without inspection in 1994, and remained until February of 2007 when he voluntarily departed. The applicant thus accrued unlawful presence from April 1, 1997 the date of enactment of the unlawful presence provisions, until February of 2007, a period in excess of one year. In applying for an immigrant visa, the applicant is seeking admission within ten years of his departure from the United States. The applicant has not

disputed his inadmissibility. Therefore, the applicant is inadmissible to the United States under section 212(a)(9)(B)(II) of the Act for having been unlawfully present in the United States for a period of more than one year.

The evidence provided relating to the potential hardships facing the applicant's spouse includes Form I-601, Form I-290B, briefs from the applicant's current and prior attorney, two affidavits from the applicant's spouse, an affidavit from the spouse's mother, a psychiatric evaluation of the applicant's spouse, the applicant's spouse's earnings statement and documentation regarding her expenses.

The applicant must first establish that her United States citizen spouse would suffer extreme hardship were she to remain in the United States while the applicant resides abroad due to his inadmissibility. With respect to this criterion, the applicant's spouse contends that she will suffer emotional and financial hardships should the applicant not be granted a waiver. In her declaration, she details the emotional hardship that she is encountering. For example, she asserts the applicant is her "best friend" and that she and the applicant have "a close and loving relationship." *Declaration from* [REDACTED] dated March 19, 2008. In addition, the record indicates that the applicant's spouse is suffering from health issues such as depression and anxiety. The declaration from the applicant's spouse and a psychiatric evaluation conducted on October 23, 2006 by [REDACTED] as well as the brief from the applicant's attorney, all support the contention that the applicant's presence is crucial for his spouse's well-being. In addition, the applicant's spouse also detailed the stress that she is experiencing, due to her son's problems in school and the absence of the applicant in his life, in her affidavit and with school records. Moreover, she also noted her emotional struggle with raising children as a single parent. While the applicant's spouse's psychological issues alone would not be enough to warrant a finding of extreme hardship, as they reflect a typical result of separation, such problems have been analyzed in the context of her other hardships.

The applicant's spouse further asserts that due to her spouse's inadmissibility, she is experiencing financial hardship because she has to maintain her household and also has to support her husband in Mexico. The record indicates that the applicant's spouse is employed by the City of Mesquite, Nevada, but that her earnings do not cover her expenses. The applicant provided his spouse's lease, which indicates that her rent accounts for more than half of her monthly income. Documentation was also provided regarding the applicant's spouse's other expenses, including medical expenses for her oldest son, utilities and transportation costs.

The record reflects that the cumulative effect of the emotional, financial and medical hardships the applicant's spouse is experiencing living in the United States without her husband rises to the level of extreme.

Extreme hardship to a qualifying relative must also be established in the event that she accompanies the applicant abroad based on the denial of the applicant's waiver request. With respect to this criterion, the applicant's spouse asserts that she would suffer emotional hardship, as she would be separated from her entire family, including her three children, her mother, her three brothers and her sister, all of whom have legal status in the United States.

In addition, the applicant's spouse asserts that that if she moved to Mexico she would lose her current employment, which affords her family with healthcare benefits. The record indicates that due to her son's health issues, she relies on her health insurance.

Were the applicant's spouse to relocate to Mexico to reside with the applicant due to his inadmissibility, the record reflects that the applicant's spouse would encounter emotional hardship, due to long-term separation from her family in the United States and her gainful employment. Moreover, as a native born United States citizen, the applicant's spouse would have to adjust to a new culture. *See Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez* at 568; *Matter of Pilch* at 631-32; *Matter of Ige* at 883; *Matter of Ngai* at 246-47; *Matter of Kim* at 89-90; *Matter of Shaughnessy* at 813. As such, the AAO concludes that based on a totality of the circumstances, the applicant's spouse would experience extreme hardship were she to relocate to Mexico to reside with the applicant due to his inadmissibility.

Considered in the aggregate, the applicant has established that his spouse would face extreme hardship if the applicant's waiver request is denied.

Extreme hardship is a requirement for eligibility, but once established it is but one favorable discretionary factor to be considered. *Matter of Mendez-Moralez*, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (BIA 1996). For waivers of inadmissibility, the burden is on the applicant to establish that a grant of a waiver of inadmissibility is warranted in the exercise of discretion. *Id.* at 299. The adverse factors evidencing an alien's undesirability as a permanent resident must be balanced with the social and humane considerations presented on his behalf to determine whether the grant of relief in the exercise of discretion appears to be in the best interests of this country. *Id.* at 300.

The AAO notes that *Matter of Marin*, 16 I & N Dec. 581 (BIA 1978), involving a section 212(c) waiver, is used in waiver cases as guidance for balancing favorable and unfavorable factors and this cross application of standards is supported by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). In *Matter of Mendez-Moralez*, the BIA, assessing the exercise of discretion under section 212(h) of the Act, stated:

We find this use of *Matter of Marin, supra*, as a general guide to be appropriate. For the most part, it is prudent to avoid cross application, as between different types of relief, of particular principles or standards for the exercise of discretion. *Id.* However, our reference to *Matter of Marin, supra*, is only for the purpose of the approach taken in that case regarding the balancing of favorable and unfavorable factors within the context of the relief being sought under section 212(h)(1)(B) of the Act. *See, e.g., Palmer v. INS*, 4 F.3d 482 (7th Cir.1993) (balancing of discretionary factors under section 212(h)). We find this guidance to be helpful and applicable, given that both forms of relief address the question of whether alien with criminal records should be admitted to the United States and allowed to reside in this country permanently.

*Matter of Mendez-Moralez* at 300.

In *Matter of Mendez-Moralez*, in evaluating whether section 212(h)(1)(B) relief is warranted in the exercise of discretion, the BIA stated that:

The factors adverse to the applicant 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, recency and seriousness, and the presence of other evidence indicative of an 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 the alien began his 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 and service to 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). . . .

*Id.* at 301.

The BIA further states that upon review of the record as a whole, a balancing of the equities and adverse matters must be made to determine whether discretion should be favorably exercised. The equities that the applicant for section 212(h)(1)(B) relief must bring forward to establish that he merits a favorable exercise of administrative discretion will depend in each case on the nature and circumstances of the ground of exclusion sought to be waived and on the presence of any additional adverse matters, and as the negative factors grow more serious, it becomes incumbent upon the applicant to introduce additional offsetting favorable evidence. *Id.* at 301.

The favorable factors in this matter are the extreme hardship the applicant's United States citizen spouse would face if the applicant were to remain in Mexico, regardless of whether she accompanied the applicant or remained in the United States, his ties to the United States, including his U.S. Citizen wife, three children and one stepchild, his support from family members and the passage of over a decade since the applicant's unlawful entry to the United States. The unfavorable factors in this matter are the applicant's unlawful entry to the United States and his unlawful presence while in the United States.

Although the applicant's violations of immigration law cannot be condoned, the positive factors in this case outweigh the negative factors. In these proceedings, the burden of establishing eligibility for the waiver rests entirely with the applicant. *See* section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. In this case, the applicant has met his burden and the appeal will be sustained.

**ORDER:** The appeal is sustained.