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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

PUBLIC COPY

[REDACTED]

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Date: SEP 15 2011

Office: TEGUCIGALPA

FILE: [REDACTED]

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

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

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,

Pr

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Field Office Director, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be sustained. The waiver application will be approved.

The record establishes that the applicant is a native and citizen of Honduras who entered the United States without authorization in July 2004. She did not depart the United States until June 2008. The applicant was thus 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.¹ The applicant seeks a waiver of inadmissibility in order to reside in the United States with her U.S. citizen spouse and child, born in 2006

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 May 29, 2009.

In support of the appeal, counsel for the applicant submits the following *inter alia*: a brief, dated December 10, 2009; medical documentation pertaining to the applicant's mother-in-law; a psychological evaluation in regards to the applicant's spouse; information about country conditions in Honduras; and financial documentation pertaining to the applicant's and her husband's mortgage. The entire record was reviewed and considered in rendering this decision.

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

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

¹ The applicant does not contest the field office director's finding of inadmissibility. Rather, she is requesting a waiver of inadmissibility.

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...

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. The applicant's U.S. citizen spouse is the only qualifying relatives in this case. Hardship to the applicant, her child or her mother-in-law 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*, 138 F.3d at 1293 (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 contends that he will suffer emotional and financial hardship were he to remain in the United States while the applicant resides abroad due to her inadmissibility. In a declaration, the applicant’s spouse explains that he is very close to his wife and long-term separation from her has resulted in depression, an inability to sleep, nightmares, and a loss of appetite. He notes that he is seeking guidance from a therapist so that he can handle the stress of long-term separation from his wife. In addition, the applicant’s spouse explains that his child is living with the applicant in Honduras and such an arrangement is causing him hardship. He explains that he is worried for his child’s welfare due to the problematic country conditions in Honduras, including poverty, violence and substandard medical care. Finally, the applicant’s spouse contends that he is unable to manage his debts as he is maintaining two households, one in the United States and one in Honduras. *Affidavit of* [REDACTED] dated August 5, 2008.

In support of the emotional hardship referenced, a letter has been provided from [REDACTED] Licensed Psychologist. [REDACTED] confirms that the applicant’s spouse is suffering from severe depressive symptoms as a result of long-term separation from his wife, and further, [REDACTED] recommends that the applicant’s spouse undergo a psychiatric evaluation for the purpose of accessing the need for psychotropic medications and continue receiving psychological help with ongoing therapy sessions. *Psychological Evaluation from* [REDACTED] Psy.D. In addition, numerous letters in support have been provided from friends and family, establishing the hardships the applicant’s spouse is experiencing due to long-term separation from his wife. Moreover, documentation has been provided from counsel establishing the problematic country conditions in

Honduras, including political instability, high unemployment, crime and violence. Finally, the record establishes that the applicant's spouse has had to sign a deed to transfer ownership of his apartment to his sister-in-law due to his inability to afford the monthly responsibilities since his wife's relocation abroad. *Letter from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]* A prolonged separation at this time would cause hardship beyond that normally expected of one facing the removal of a spouse. Thus, based on a thorough review of the record, the AAO concludes that were the applicant unable to reside in the United States, the applicant's spouse would suffer extreme hardship.

In regards to relocating abroad, the applicant's spouse explains that he was born in the Dominican Republic and has been living in the United States for over 20 years and relocating to Honduras, a country with which he is not familiar, would cause him hardship. In addition, the applicant's spouse explains that his U.S. citizen mother is completely dependent on him as he is her only living son and relocating abroad would cause him hardship as he would not be available to care for her on a regular basis. The applicant's spouse further notes that as an American citizen, he fears he would be targeted by gangs. Finally, the applicant's spouse asserts that due to the problematic economy in Honduras, he would not be able to obtain gainful employment to support himself and his family and continue paying his U.S. debts. *Supra* at 1-2.

The record indicates that the applicant's spouse has resided in the United States for more than 20 years. The applicant's spouse's extended family, including his mother, step-father and step-sisters, reside in the United States. Moreover, the applicant's spouse has strong community and employment ties, as he has been employed with Hammock Sign Supplies since 2006. The record reflects that the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse would have to adjust to a country with which he is not familiar. Moreover, as documented by counsel, the applicant's spouse would not be able to maintain his quality of living due to the substandard economy in Honduras and he would be concerned regarding his safety and well-being due to the high levels of crime and violence. Further, the U.S. Government continues to grant Hondurans living in the United States Temporary Protected Status (TPS), thus confirming the difficult conditions in Honduras. It has thus been established that the applicant's spouse would suffer extreme hardship were he to relocate abroad to reside with the applicant due to her inadmissibility.

A review of the documentation in the record, when considered in its totality, reflects that the applicant has established that her 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 he 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-Morales, 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 favorable factors in this matter are the extreme hardship the applicant's U.S. citizen spouse and child would face if the applicant were to remain in Honduras, regardless of whether they accompanied the applicant or remained in the United States, support letters, the applicant's apparent lack of a criminal record, volunteer work in the community and home ownership. The unfavorable factors in this matter are the applicant's entry to the United States without authorization and unlawful presence while in the United States.

The immigration violations committed by the applicant are serious in nature and cannot be condoned. Nonetheless, 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 proceedings for application for waiver of grounds of inadmissibility, the burden of establishing that the application merits approval remains entirely with the applicant. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The applicant has sustained that burden. Accordingly, this appeal will be sustained and the application approved.

ORDER: The appeal is sustained. The waiver application is approved.