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



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

PUBLIC COPY



H6

DATE: MAR 05 2012

OFFICE: MANILA

FILE:

IN RE:

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:



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.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. 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 \$630. Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Field Office Director, Manila, Philippines, and is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The applicant is a native and citizen of the Philippines who entered the United States without admission or parole on July 4, 1992 and remained in the United States until his departure on October 18, 2006. The applicant accrued unlawful presence in the United States from April 1, 1997, the effective date of the unlawful presence provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), until October 18, 2006. The applicant was found to be inadmissible to the United States pursuant to section 212(a)(9)(B)(i)(II) of 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 seeking readmission within ten years of his last departure from the United States. The applicant is a beneficiary of an approved Petition for Alien Relative, as a spouse of a U.S. citizen, who seeks a waiver of inadmissibility in order to reside in the United States with his U.S. citizen spouse.

The Field Office Director concluded that the record failed to establish the existence of extreme hardship for a qualifying relative upon separation and also found that the applicant did not merit a grant of a waiver based on discretion. The Field Officer Director denied the application accordingly. *See Decision of the Field Office Director*, dated August 18, 2009.

On appeal, counsel for the applicant asserts that the applicant has demonstrated extreme hardship to a qualifying relative upon both separation and relocation. In support of the waiver application and appeal, the applicant submitted affidavits from himself and his spouse, affidavits and letters of support, medical and psychological documentation concerning the applicant's spouse, travel documents, identity documents, background information concerning the Philippines, medical documentation concerning the applicant's spouse's mother, financial documents, family photographs, a letter from the applicant's spouse's employer, and evidence of volunteer activities. The entire record was reviewed and considered in rendering a decision on the appeal.

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

(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 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 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. No court shall have jurisdiction to review a decision or action by the Attorney General regarding a waiver under this clause.

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 qualifying relative in this case is his U.S. citizen spouse. The record contains references to hardship the applicant, applicant's spouse's mother, or her employer would experience if the waiver application were denied. It is noted that Congress did not include hardship to these individuals as factors to be considered in assessing extreme hardship. In the present case, the applicant's spouse is the only qualifying relative for the waiver under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act, and hardship to these other individuals will not be separately considered, except as they may affect the applicant's spouse.

The record reflects that the applicant is a forty-four year-old native and citizen of the Philippines. The applicant's spouse is a thirty-seven year-old native of Ecuador and citizen of the United States. The applicant is currently residing in the Philippines and the applicant's spouse is residing in [REDACTED].

The applicant asserts that he is currently working a part-time, temporary job in the Philippines, but that he relies upon his wife financially. *See* [REDACTED] dated September 30, 2009. The applicant's spouse states that it is a financial burden to travel to see her husband in the Philippines and that it risks her job security to ask for time off for these visits. *See Affidavit of* [REDACTED] dated October 13, 2009. The applicant submitted a psychological evaluation of his spouse stating that she has been using their savings to support herself. *See Psychological Evaluation of* [REDACTED], dated October 30, 2008. However, the evaluation also notes that the applicant's spouse holds an associate's degree and has been employed with Rotary International since 2000. *Id.* The applicant submitted a letter from his wife's employer stating that she performs excellent work and they would be hard-pressed to ever replace her. *See Letter from* [REDACTED], dated October 27, 2008. The applicant's spouse is portrayed as a nearly irreplaceable employee with an employer who is well aware of her emotional challenges. *Id.* The record also contains financial and tax documentation indicating that the applicant's spouse earned an income exceeding thirty-six thousand dollars in

2008. *See 2008 Tax Return*. There is no indication that the applicant's spouse is past due on any payments or otherwise unable to meet her financial obligations. Further, the courts considering the impact of financial detriment on a finding of extreme hardship have repeatedly held that, while it must be considered in the overall determination, it is not enough by itself to justify an extreme hardship determination. *See INS v. Jong Ha Wang*, 450 U.S. 139 (1981) (upholding BIA finding that economic detriment alone is insufficient to establish extreme hardship).

The applicant's spouse asserts that it is extremely difficult to live without her husband and that she turns to spiritual leaders to assist with her emotional hardship. *See Affidavit of* [REDACTED] [REDACTED] dated October 13, 2009. The applicant's spouse further states that the Ketsana hurricane in the Philippines caused her to worry about the safety of her husband. *Id.* The record contains letters of support stating how much the applicant's spouse misses residing with her husband. The record also contains a psychological evaluation of the applicant's spouse stating that she is experiencing psychological distress in the form of depression and anxiety. *See Psychological Evaluation of* [REDACTED] [REDACTED] dated October 30, 2008. It is noted that there is no treatment recommendation in the evaluation, but the applicant states that she has relied upon her faith to stay strong. *See Affidavit of* [REDACTED] [REDACTED] dated October 13, 2009. It is acknowledged that separation from a spouse nearly always creates a level of hardship for both parties and the record demonstrates that the applicant's spouse is suffering from emotional hardship in the absence of her husband. However, her emotional hardship is not so serious that she is unable to continue in her employment and act as the caretaker for her mother. There is insufficient evidence in the record to find that the applicant's spouse will suffer a level of emotional hardship beyond the common results of inadmissibility or removal if the applicant remains in the Philippines.

Although the depth of concern and anxiety over the applicant's immigration status is neither doubted nor minimized, the fact remains that Congress provided for a waiver of inadmissibility only under limited circumstances. While the prospect of separation or involuntary relocation nearly always results in considerable hardship to individuals and families, in specifically limiting the availability of a waiver of inadmissibility to cases of "extreme hardship," Congress did not intend that a waiver be granted in every case where a qualifying relationship exists.

The Field Office Director, in his decision, determined that the applicant's spouse would face extreme hardship if she had to relocate to the Philippines to live with her husband. *See Decision of Field Office Director*, dated August 19, 2009. This determination was based upon the fact that the applicant's spouse serves as the caretaker for her mother, who suffers from medical hardships; the applicant's spouse's family ties in the United States; her long-term employment with the same employer; ownership of property; and her ties to the community. *Id.* In this case, the AAO concurs that the record contains sufficient evidence to show that the hardships faced by the qualifying relative, if she were to relocate to the Philippines, rise to the level of extreme hardship.

The record, however, does not contain sufficient evidence to show that the hardships faced by the qualifying relative upon separation, considered in the aggregate, rise beyond the common

results of removal or inadmissibility to the level of extreme hardship. U.S. court decisions have repeatedly held that the common results of removal are insufficient to prove extreme hardship. *See Hassan v. INS*, 927 F.2d 465, 468 (9th Cir. 1991), *Perez v. INS*, 96 F.3d 390 (9th Cir. 1996); *Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. 627 (BIA 1996) (holding that emotional hardship caused by severing family and community ties is a common result of deportation and does not constitute extreme hardship); *Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. 810 (BIA 1968) (holding that separation of family members and financial difficulties alone do not establish extreme hardship). “[O]nly in cases of great actual or prospective injury . . . will the bar be removed.” *Matter of Ngai*, 19 I&N Dec. 245, 246 (BIA 1984).

We can find extreme hardship warranting a waiver of inadmissibility only where an applicant has demonstrated extreme hardship to a qualifying relative in the scenario of separation *and* the scenario of relocation. A claim that a qualifying relative will relocate and thereby suffer extreme hardship can easily be made for purposes of the waiver even where there is no actual intention to relocate. *Cf. Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. 880, 886 (BIA 1994). Furthermore, to relocate and suffer extreme hardship, where remaining the United States and being separated from the applicant would not result in extreme hardship, is a matter of choice and not the result of inadmissibility. *Id.*, *also cf. Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. 627, 632-33 (BIA 1996). As the applicant has not demonstrated extreme hardship from separation, we cannot find that refusal of admission would result in extreme hardship to the qualifying relative in this case.

The AAO therefore finds that the applicant has failed to establish extreme hardship to her U.S. citizen spouse as required under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act. As the applicant has not established extreme hardship to a qualifying family member, no purpose would be served in determining whether the applicant merits this waiver as a matter of discretion.

In proceedings for application for waiver of grounds of inadmissibility under section 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act, the burden of proving eligibility remains entirely with the applicant. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, the applicant has not met that burden. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.