



Legislative Building

Washington State Legislature

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

July 23, 2018

The Hon. Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20393

SCANNED/RECEIVED
BY EXEC SEC
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Dear Secretary Nielsen:

The undersigned Washington State legislators respectfully request that the Department of Homeland Security reconsider its proposal to revoke eligibility for employment authorization to certain H-4 dependent spouses of workers under *1615 – AC15, Removing H-4 Dependent Spouses from the Class of Aliens Eligible for Employment Authorization*. This common sense measure to address the green card backlog was granted under the H-4 rule in 2015; revoking it now would create significant uncertainty and financial hardship for many highly skilled professionals who are vital to the state of Washington and our economy.

Washington's entrepreneurial spirit is pivotal to our strong economy and immigrants are an undeniable factor in this growth. According to a [New American Economy](#) report, over 57,000 immigrant entrepreneurs employ more than 141,000 people in Washington and generate \$27.5 billion in spending power. Washington's largest corporations, which include world-renowned tech businesses, such as Amazon, Boeing and Microsoft, also employ a diverse workforce of talented individuals from across the state, the nation and the world. Many of these foreign-born, high-skilled professionals are granted temporary work permits such as the H1-B visa.

Some of these workers moved to the United States with their families and, being the only ones allowed to work, were sole breadwinners. In 2015, however, acknowledging the economic hardship facing the families of many H1-B workers awaiting the final stages of the green card process, the Department of Homeland Security extended eligibility for employment authorization to their spouses.

Many H-4 visa holders, mostly women, have reached out to us to share their stories. They've told us how hard it was to be at home knowing that their willingness and drive to help their families were futile before the regulation was in place. Now, thanks to the implementation of the H-4 rule, they have been improving the financial security of their families while also paying taxes and contributing to our economy. Some of them fill positions in our schools, hospitals and the retail industry. Others have started businesses that create jobs for US citizens.

Immigrants who work here, including H-4 visa holders, contribute to our nation's continued economic vitality. We hope you will reconsider this proposed rule rescission.

Sincerely,



Vandana Slatter
State Representative – 48th Legislative District



Beth Doglio
State Representative – 22nd Legislative District



Guy Palumbo
State Senator – 1st Legislative District



Sherry Appleton
State Representative – 23rd Legislative District



Derek Stanford
State Representative – 1st Legislative District



Steve Tharinger
State Representative – 24th Legislative District



Andy Billig
State Senator – 3rd Legislative District



Laurie Jenkins
State Representative – 27th Legislative District



Timm Ormsby
State Representative – 3rd Legislative District



Jake Fey
State Representative – 27th Legislative District



Larry E. Haler
State Representative – 8th Legislative District



Michael Pellicciotti
State Representative – 30th Legislative District



Strom Peterson
State Representative – 21st Legislative District



Maralyn Chase
State Senator – 32nd Legislative District



Sam Hunt
State Senator – 22nd Legislative District



Ruth Kagi
State Representative – 32nd Legislative District

Cindy Ryu
State Representative – 32nd Legislative District

Mia Gregerson
State Representative – 33rd Legislative District

Sharon Nelson
State Senator – 34th Legislative District

Eileen Cody
State Representative – 34th Legislative District

Joe Fitzgibbon
State Representative – 34th Legislative District

Rebecca Saldaña
State Senator – 37th Legislative District

Sharon Tomiko Santos
State Representative – 37th Legislative District

June Robinson
State Representative – 38th Legislative District

Mike Sells
State Representative – 38th Legislative District

Lisa Wellman
State Senator – 41st Legislative District

Tana Senn
State Representative – 41st Legislative District

Nicole Macri
State Representative – 43rd Legislative District

Manka Dhingra
State Senator – 45th Legislative District

Larry Springer
State Representative – 45th Legislative District

David Frockt
State Senator – 46th Legislative District

Javier Valdez
State Representative – 46th Legislative District

Joan McBride
State Representative – 48th Legislative District

Monica Stonier
State Representative – 49th Legislative District

cc:

Governor Jay Inslee

Attorney General Bob Ferguson

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Maria Cantwell

Representative Suzan DelBene

Representative Rick Larsen

Representative Jaime Herrera Butler

Representative Dan Newhouse

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Representative Derek Kilmer

Representative Pramila Jayapal

Representative Dave Reichert

Representative Adam Smith

Representative Denny Heck



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

October 9, 2018

The Honorable Vandana Slatter
Washington State Legislature
Legislative Building
Olympia, Washington 98504

Dear Ms. Slatter:

Thank you for your July 23, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to growing the U.S. economy and creating jobs for U.S. workers. In fact, pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13788, DHS is required to “propose new rules and issue new guidance, to supersede or revise previous rules and guidance if appropriate, to protect the interests of U.S. workers in the administration of our immigration system, including through the prevention of fraud or abuse.” See E.O. 13788, *Buy American and Hire American*, 82 Fed. Reg. 18,837 (April 18, 2017). The public will be given an opportunity to provide feedback during a notice and comment period on any revisions to regulations that DHS determines appropriate, including revisions relating to the rule providing employment authorization to certain H-4 nonimmigrants.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LFC", written over a light blue horizontal line.

L. Francis Cissna
Director