

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2019

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretaries Nielsen and Pompeo:


We write in response to the Administration's decision to close the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) international offices and transfer responsibility for facilitating intercountry adoptions to existing State Department personnel at embassies and consulates.

Currently, USCIS operates field offices in countries around the world and offers a range of services—including helping to enable adoptive children join permanent families in the U.S. In fiscal year 2018, 4,059 children from other countries were adopted by parents in the United States—655 fewer than the year before. On average, these adoptions took more than a year to process. We are concerned that the Administration's decision to close these offices could exacerbate already long processing times for intercountry adoptions, lengthening stays in orphanages, and potentially denying children critical time with their future families.


We understand that USCIS plans to transfer the work currently being done by its international offices to existing State Department personnel. We are also concerned that these additional requirements could result in lengthier processing times in light of the fact that significant cuts have been proposed to the State Department's budget. In addition, it is unclear if State Department personnel have the necessary authorities and dedicated resources to complete the same tasks as effectively as the current USCIS staff.

We respectfully ask that your Departments take action to ensure that adoptive children waiting to join permanent families in the United States are not negatively impacted by the decision to close international offices. Thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



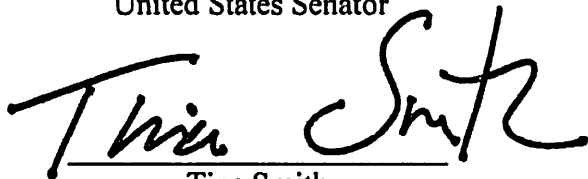
John Boozman
United States Senator



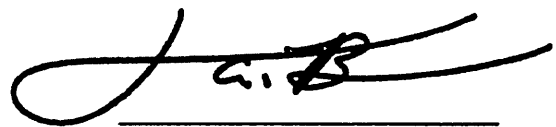
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



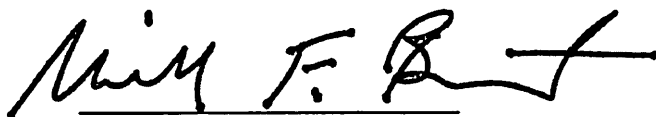
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

May 2, 2019

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Thank you for your April 2, 2019 letter to the Department of Homeland Security.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) maintains its commitment to the timely and efficient adjudication and processing of intercountry adoption cases. Much of the intercountry adoption case processing and adjudication already occurs domestically in the United States. The adoption workload previously handled at USCIS international field offices is anticipated to shift to USCIS offices in the United States for processing and/or to the U.S. Department of State (DOS), as appropriate.

The USCIS National Benefits Center, located in Overland Park, Kansas, adjudicates all applications and petitions related to the adoption of children from countries that are party to the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption*, as well as, all domestically filed non-Hague (orphan) related applications and petitions. U.S. embassies and consulates issue all adoption-related immigrant visas and Hague Certificates abroad. USCIS delegates limited authority to DOS to adjudicate orphan petitions in locations where USCIS is not present. USCIS will closely coordinate internally and with our colleagues at DOS to mitigate any potential disruption for intercountry adoption cases during the transition.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna
Director