

March 29, 2019

Dear Member of Congress:

On March 12, United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) announced it was considering closing 23 different field offices in over 20 countries around the globe, effectively eliminating its entire International Operations Division (IO). If these offices close, customers, including many U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, will likely see a decrease, if not a complete loss, of vital services. These offices play a crucial role in programs such as international adoptions, refugee processing, and providing services to military members and their families abroad. Closure of these offices would also exacerbate USCIS case processing delays that have already reached crisis levels. **We write to draw your attention to this announcement and to urge you to use your oversight authority to prohibit the closure of the USCIS International Operations Division.**

The value of this division within USCIS is made clear by USCIS's own description of the work done within the IO. According to USCIS, the IO primarily assist "U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, asylees, and refugees. U.S. citizens who wish to adopt internationally... members of the U.S. military and their families who wish to become U.S. citizens; people who may qualify to enter the U.S. because they are recognized by law as being members of specific categories with a special need, such as widows or widowers of U.S. citizens; and lawful permanent residents who have traveled abroad and whose green cards have been lost or stolen." The IOs also help ensure the integrity of the immigration system by providing fraud and security services during the adjudication of immigration applications. While the bulk of IO operations lie in 23 offices around the globe, the IO is headquartered in Washington, DC and maintains offices in Florida and California. **Throughout the world and in the United States, the IO is strategically located to provide critical services for American citizens, vulnerable populations, and permanent residents by helping to make the legal immigration system secure and seamless.**

We are troubled that the decision to close these offices appears to have been made without any assessment of the impact on the public, with no attention to the impact on current staff, or with any clear plan for managing the affected programs in the future. We question how USCIS can justify what appears to be a hasty and drastic plan that will almost certainly result in a diminution of services. The administration has failed to provide the public with detailed analysis, studies, or reports that justify the office closures. **Given the impact to citizens, residents, and military personnel, it is critical to ask the administration for further information about what led to such a drastic course of action.**

As such, we respectfully request members of Congress engage in robust oversight and prevent this decision from being implemented. We urge members to consider options such as prohibiting closure of the International Operations Division until the administration can provide a detailed justification or Congress can acquire an analysis on the impact of the closures through the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Alternatively, Members of Congress could send detailed oversight letters requesting this information and more. As organizations that care deeply about the many individuals and families that will be impacted by these closures, we urge you to take immediate action.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Authentic Caribbean Foundation Inc.
Bethany Christian Services
Brazilian Women's Group

Catholic Charities Boston
Center for Victims of Torture
Church World Service
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights - CHIRLA
Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
Franciscan Action Network
HIAS
Human Rights First
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
International Refugee Assistance Project
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Irish International Immigrant Center
Justice Center of Southeast Massachusetts LLC
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
National Council For Adoption
National Council of Jewish Women
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights | NNIRR
National Partnership for New Americans
Northeast Justice Center
Refugees International
Spence-Chapin Services to Families & Children
The Episcopal Church
UnidosUS
We Are All America