

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 21, 2020

Joseph Edlow
Deputy Director for Policy and Acting Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Acting Director Edlow:

We are deeply concerned that the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) plans to furlough over 13,000 federal employees starting August 30, 2020. It has come to our attention that USCIS is no longer projecting a deficit for this fiscal year and can continue to pay its employees beyond the agency's self-imposed deadline. We strongly urge you to use these funds to maintain employment for these federal workers. We are committed to work with you to prevent the impending furloughs of all USCIS employees from Virginia and across the country, and are willing to work together to find a solution to address the USCIS budget shortfall.

We appreciate the conversations we have had with you, and the various concerns and nuances you have highlighted. While we differ with President Trump's administration on many immigration policy matters and believe USCIS could benefit from better fiscal management, USCIS civil servants should not be forced to pay the price for this administration's choices and other agency decisions that led to the current financial state of USCIS.

As you know all too well, furloughing approximately 13,400 USCIS employees on August 30, would have disastrous effects on the livelihoods of families in the Commonwealth and across the country. In Virginia alone, more than 750 civil servants could be left without a paycheck amidst the tremendous economic uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequences of such furloughs would not only reverberate within their families and our region, but also within the immigrant communities USCIS serves.

Employees at USCIS perform critical work in processing visa petitions, asylum, citizenship, and naturalization applications, green cards and refugee applications. If USCIS were to furlough a vast majority of its workforce, this would drastically undercut the agency's mission to facilitate lawful entry and immigration to the United States. People throughout Virginia and the United States count on a fully functioning USCIS, including countless immigrants who await naturalization ceremonies, employers who rely on the talent and labor of nonimmigrant workers, and vulnerable populations such as asylum seekers.

While we remain dedicated to finding a workable solution for USCIS and its employees, we urge an immediate halt of all furloughs planned for August 30. Federal workers and immigrant communities deserve better than the havoc that would be brought on by such furloughs. We look forward to continuing conversations with you and our Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure we come to a solution.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator