

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20350

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, S.W.
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Kenneth T. Cuccinelli
Senior Official
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Attorney General Barr, Acting Secretary Wolf, and Mr. Cuccinelli,

Thank you for your hard work in keeping our nation healthy and safe during the COVID-19 crisis. As your agencies work to maintain essential operations amid the ongoing public health emergency, we write to bring specific attention to the growing uncertainty facing immigrants who have reached the final stage of the naturalization process during this pandemic.

As you know, routine services at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices were suspended on March 18, 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19. Although we applaud the decision to limit exposure risks for USCIS personnel and individuals seeking assistance, the continued suspension of in-person services at USCIS offices has stalled the administration of the Oath of Allegiance for many individuals seeking naturalization.

The oath is the final step in the naturalization process, but is largely ceremonial. Given ongoing public health risks, we agree that it is prudent to continue exercising caution in the administration of in-person ceremonies. At the same time, postponing naturalization ceremonies for months will exacerbate the current naturalization backlog, which was over 650,000 cases as of September 2019. Additionally, leaving approximately 126,000 immigrants—many who have waited years to earn citizenship—unable to naturalize puts them in unnecessary legal limbo.

Under U.S. law (8 U.S.C. §1448), individuals may be granted an expedited judicial oath administration or administrative naturalization upon demonstration of sufficient cause. Given the unprecedented circumstances currently facing our country, we ask that these authorities be utilized to remotely administer or waive the Oath of Allegiance amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition

to providing certainty to thousands of immigrant families, this effort would prevent unnecessary increases to our preexisting naturalization backlog.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We hope everyone in your agency remains healthy.

Sincerely,



John Katko
Member of Congress

J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Susan W. Brooks
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Norma J. Torres
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Vicente Gonzalez
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Aumua Amata C. Radewagen
Member of Congress