



Cities for Action Statement on USCIS Emergency Funding Request & the Need for Accountability Measures

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The Cities for Action coalition expresses deep concern about the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) budget crisis, which if unresolved could result in the furlough of nearly 70% of its workforce. USCIS is a crucial agency charged with granting immigration benefits and statuses, helping our immigrant communities find greater stability. This is why Cities for Action strongly urges Congress to take action to ensure that the vital work of USCIS can continue.

This Congressional emergency funding must not be issued as a blank check. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly affected USCIS’s mostly application-fee-based revenue. However, the agency has been predicting the same \$1.2 billion deficit figure well before the pandemic disrupted its work. The bigger and more obvious reason for USCIS’s budget crisis is the Trump Administration’s steady stream of anti-immigrant policies. These policies have intentionally and drastically decreased application rates, resulting in decreased revenue, and have unnecessarily increased processing backlogs, resulting in costly inefficiencies and deterrence of new applications.

To truly address the root causes of USCIS’s budget crisis and to ensure the future financial health of this vital agency, Cities for Action calls on Congress to provide USCIS with emergency funding conditioned upon greater accountability measures such as:

1. Comprehensive investigation and recommendations on how to increase revenue and applications while decreasing the inefficiencies that result in processing backlogs. Such a report should provide greater transparency into the agency’s past expenditures that have led to the budget shortfall and on how the agency develops and implements some of its most resource-intensive policies.
2. Implementation of measures that will encourage new applications in order to generate new revenue such as halting the implementation of its proposed fee increase, which will increase the fee for certain applications by more than 80%, and the expansion of premium processing for applications commonly used by its business customers.
3. Prohibition on transfer of funds to the enforcement agencies within DHS, including the proposal within USCIS’s fee increase regulation that would transfer \$200 million to ICE.
4. Re-commitment to USCIS’s service-oriented mission by immediately suspending its anti-immigrant policies. These policies have sowed fear and confusion in immigrant communities, depressing new applications and petitions, and resulting in USCIS adjudicators engaging in complex and time consuming analysis that creates operational logjams.
5. Adoption of measures that promote transparency and efficiency by eliminating costly application and adjudication barriers such as requiring in-person interviews when unnecessary; ceasing to reject applications due to alleged incompleteness or blank spaces; more judiciously issuing requests for evidence or notices of intent to deny in order to prevent requests for evidence already provided or unnecessary to prove eligibility.



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6. Provision of remote naturalization ceremonies to accommodate the permanent residents whose final step in the citizenship process has been delayed due to the pandemic.

USCIS is vital to the welcoming and integration of our immigrant communities. Cities for Action strongly urges Congress to provide emergency funding to USCIS on the condition that the agency ensure greater accountability into its practices and reaffirm its service-oriented mission to “secure America’s promise as a nation of immigrants.”