



The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

RECEIVED
By ESEC at 11:28 am, Nov 12, 2024

October 31, 2024

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

On behalf of the Youth Leaders of the End SIJS Backlog Coalition, we respectfully submit the attached letters written to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency. The enclosed letters were written by impacted Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) youth urging USCIS to create an Advance Parole policy for them. The End SIJS Backlog Coalition (“the Coalition”), a project of the National Immigration Project, is a national group of over 150 organizations and impacted youth working together to educate Congress, relevant administrative agencies, and the public about the harmful impacts of visa caps on vulnerable immigrant children, and to advocate for an end to the green card visa backlog for SIJS youth. The creation of a SIJS Advance Parole policy is something the Coalition has raised to USCIS and was the subject of a letter from 18 U.S. Senators sent to your office advocating for the same in August 2024.

We urge USCIS to listen to the asks of impacted youth and ensure that SIJS youth stuck in the visa backlog have access to Advance Parole so they can travel to reunite with sick or dying relatives or advance their education and professional development. As you know, SIJS was established by Congress to provide a pathway to lawful permanent status for undocumented children who have suffered parental abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Despite SIJS being a humanitarian status, SIJS green card visas are currently categorized as employment-based visas. This has led to a visa backlog where youth have to wait years before they can apply for lawful permanent residence. During their time stuck in the visa backlog, SIJS youth cannot leave the country and return lawfully. Meanwhile, SIJS youth are missing out on important opportunities and life experiences.

In August and September the Coalition hosted in-person gatherings for SIJS youth across the country to discuss the challenges SIJS youth are facing due to the years of limbo caused by the

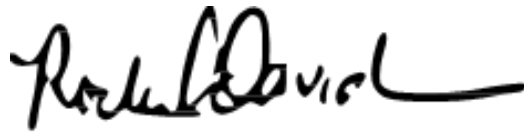
SIJS backlog. The enclosed letters were written by impacted SIJS youth to share with you how the creation of an Advance Parole policy would positively impact their lives and to urge you to take action. We hope you will take the time to read their letters and understand why this issue is so important to SIJS youth.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the creation of a SIJS Advance Parole policy further.

Respectfully,



Alejandra Cruz
Youth Organizer
End SIJS Backlog Coalition
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Rachel L. Davidson
Director
End SIJS Backlog Coalition
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cc: The Honorable Ur Jaddou
Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of the Director
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

December 12, 2024

Alejandra Cruz
Youth Organizer
End SIJS Backlog Coalition
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Dear Ms. Cruz:

Thank you for your October 31, 2024 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding advance parole for Special Immigrant Juvenile (SIJ) classified youth. I am responding on behalf of the Department.

We acknowledge your concern regarding wait times for immigrant visas in the employment-based fourth preference category. These wait times have been exacerbated in recent years due to increased demand relative to visa availability under existing statutory authority. We also appreciate the letters you included from SIJ beneficiaries. We recognize the challenges they face because of the visa backlog, and we are working to allow this population to remain safely in the United States with a means to apply for lawful permanent resident status.

We appreciate your concerns and your suggestions for implementing an advance parole process for SIJ youth subject to the visa backlog to enable them to temporary travel outside of the United States. Under section 212(d)(5)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(d)(5)(A), the Secretary of Homeland Security, in his discretion, may parole an applicant for admission into the United States temporarily on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please share this response with the individual who cosigned your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact the USCIS Public Engagement Division by email at public.engagement@uscis.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Ur M. Jaddou
Director