



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

**Non-Precedent Decision of the
Administrative Appeals Office**

In Re: 22628586

Date: OCT. 19, 2022

Appeal of Texas Service Center Decision

Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker (Advanced Degree, Exceptional Ability, National Interest Waiver)

The Petitioner, a researcher, seeks second preference immigrant classification as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree, as well as a national interest waiver of the job offer requirement attached to this EB-2 classification. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) section 203(b)(2), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2).

The Director of the Texas Service Center denied the petition, concluding that the Petitioner qualified for classification as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree, but that she had not established that a waiver of the required job offer, and thus of the labor certification, would be in the national interest.

On appeal, the Petitioner submits additional documentation and a brief asserting that she is eligible for a national interest waiver. In these proceedings, it is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Upon *de novo* review, we will sustain the appeal.

I. LAW

To establish eligibility for a national interest waiver, a petitioner must first demonstrate qualification for the underlying EB-2 visa classification, as either an advanced degree professional or an individual of exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business. Because this classification requires that the individual's services be sought by a U.S. employer, a separate showing is required to establish that a waiver of the job offer requirement is in the national interest.

Section 203(b) of the Act sets out this sequential framework:

- (2) Aliens who are members of the professions holding advanced degrees or aliens of exceptional ability. –
 - (A) In general. – Visas shall be made available . . . to qualified immigrants who are members of the professions holding advanced degrees or their equivalent or

who because of their exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business, will substantially benefit prospectively the national economy, cultural or educational interests, or welfare of the United States, and whose services in the sciences, arts, professions, or business are sought by an employer in the United States.

(B) Waiver of job offer –

(i) National interest waiver. . . . [T]he Attorney General may, when the Attorney General deems it to be in the national interest, waive the requirements of subparagraph (A) that an alien’s services in the sciences, arts, professions, or business be sought by an employer in the United States.

While neither the statute nor the pertinent regulations define the term “national interest,” we set forth a framework for adjudicating national interest waiver petitions in the precedent decision *Matter of Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. 884 (AAO 2016). *Dhanasar* states that after a petitioner has established eligibility for EB-2 classification, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may, as matter of discretion¹, grant a national interest waiver if the petitioner demonstrates: (1) that the foreign national’s proposed endeavor has both substantial merit and national importance; (2) that the foreign national is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor; and (3) that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.

The first prong, substantial merit and national importance, focuses on the specific endeavor that the foreign national proposes to undertake. The endeavor’s merit may be demonstrated in a range of areas such as business, entrepreneurialism, science, technology, culture, health, or education. In determining whether the proposed endeavor has national importance, we consider its potential prospective impact.

The second prong shifts the focus from the proposed endeavor to the foreign national. To determine whether he or she is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor, we consider factors including, but not limited to: the individual’s education, skills, knowledge and record of success in related or similar efforts; a model or plan for future activities; any progress towards achieving the proposed endeavor; and the interest of potential customers, users, investors, or other relevant entities or individuals.

The third prong requires the petitioner to demonstrate that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification. In performing this analysis, USCIS may evaluate factors such as: whether, in light of the nature of the foreign national’s qualifications or the proposed endeavor, it would be impractical either for the foreign national to secure a job offer or for the petitioner to obtain a labor certification; whether, even assuming that other qualified U.S. workers are available, the United States would still benefit from the foreign national’s contributions; and whether the national interest in the foreign national’s contributions is sufficiently urgent to warrant forgoing the labor certification process. In each case, the factor(s)

¹ See also *Poursina v. USCIS*, No. 17-16579, 2019 WL 4051593 (Aug. 28, 2019) (finding USCIS’ decision to grant or deny a national interest waiver to be discretionary in nature).

considered must, taken together, indicate that on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.²

II. ANALYSIS

The Director found that the Petitioner qualifies as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree.³ The sole issue to be determined is whether the Petitioner has established that a waiver of the requirement of a job offer, and thus a labor certification, would be in the national interest.

At the time of filing, the Petitioner was working as a research scientist “assigned to a full-time, long-term contract position at the [redacted] in [redacted] Maryland.”⁴ With regard to her proposed endeavor, the Petitioner indicated that she planned “to continue studying the underlying mechanisms of the [redacted] in order to develop novel therapeutic strategies for [redacted] diseases, [redacted] injuries, [redacted] and other disorders involving the [redacted] system.” The record includes a June 2020 letter from [redacted] Director of the [redacted] Laboratory, [redacted] stating:

Towards the goal of developing complex cellular models for the discovery and development of new treatment options for [redacted] disorders, [the Petitioner] is developing state-of-the-art [redacted] to study the effect of [redacted] on human [redacted] and determine the effect of drugs on the [redacted] human [redacted]. Specifically, [the Petitioner] has been developing a [redacted] model of [redacted] using [redacted] derived human [redacted] cells

The Petitioner further explained that her proposed endeavor involves:

- 1) Developing a [redacted] on a multi well plate that can replicate a functional [redacted] network of [redacted] using [redacted] derived [redacted] cells;
- 2) Designing and fabricating different biomedical assays, tools, instrumentation, and initiat[ing] collaboration with commercial entities; and
- 3) Designing a fully developed and functional in vitro [redacted] model [redacted] to perform high throughput [redacted] screening on a large scale for biomedical drug testing.

For the reasons discussed below, we conclude the Petitioner has established eligibility for a national interest waiver under the analytical framework set forth in *Dhanasar*.

² See *Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. at 888-91, for elaboration on these three prongs.

³ The Petitioner presented her Ph.D. in Basic Medical Science (2011) from University of [redacted] in India. She also submitted two academic evaluation reports which both concluded that the aforementioned degree is the foreign equivalent of a U.S. Ph.D. in Medical Science from an accredited college or university in the United States.

⁴ As the Petitioner is applying for a waiver of the job offer requirement, it is not necessary for her to have a job offer from a specific employer. However, we will consider information about her position to illustrate the capacity in which she intends to work in order to determine whether her proposed endeavor meets the requirements of the *Dhanasar* framework.

A. Substantial Merit and National Importance of the Proposed Endeavor

As evidence that her proposed research has substantial merit and national importance, the Petitioner presented letters of support discussing how her undertaking stands to provide complex cellular models for the discovery and development of new treatment options for [redacted] disorders. She also presented information about [redacted] and [redacted] in the United States and their adverse impact on U.S. public health. Additionally, the Petitioner has submitted documentation indicating that the benefit of her proposed [redacted] research has broader implications for the field, as the results are disseminated to others in the field through scientific journals and conferences. As the Petitioner has demonstrated both the substantial merit and national importance of her proposed research, she has established that she meets the first prong of the *Dhanasar* framework.

B. Well Positioned to Advance the Proposed Endeavor

The second prong shifts the focus from the proposed endeavor to the Petitioner. The record includes her curriculum vitae, academic records (including her Ph.D. in Medical Science), published articles, peer review activity, and documentation of numerous articles that cited to her research findings.⁵ In addition, the Petitioner offered reference letters describing her expertise in [redacted] research and her past record of success in that field. Several expert references identify specific examples of how the Petitioner's research progress relating to the treatment of [redacted] disorders has affected her field. As corroborating documentation regarding the significance of her work, the Petitioner provided evidence showing that her published work has been frequently cited by independent researchers. Her experience and expertise as a [redacted] published articles, citation evidence, record of success contributing to various research projects, and progress in her field position her well to advance her proposed endeavor. Accordingly, the Petitioner has demonstrated that she satisfies the second prong of the *Dhanasar* framework.

C. Balancing Factors to Determine Waiver's Benefit to the United States

As explained above, the third prong requires the petitioner to demonstrate that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.⁶ As a [redacted] with a Ph.D., the Petitioner possesses considerable experience and expertise in her research field. The record also demonstrates the widespread public health benefits associated with research progress in improving treatment for [redacted] disorders and other [redacted] diseases. In addition, the Petitioner has documented her past successes in advancing research relating

⁵ "USCIS considers an advanced degree, particularly a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), in a STEM field tied to the proposed endeavor and related to work furthering a critical and emerging technology or other STEM area important to U.S. competitiveness or national security, an especially positive factor to be considered along with other evidence for purposes of the assessment under the second prong." See 6 *USCIS Policy Manual* F.5(D)(2), <https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual>.

⁶ When evaluating the third prong, USCIS considers the following combination of facts contained in the record to be a strong positive factor:

- The person possesses an advanced STEM degree, particularly a Ph.D.;
- The person will be engaged in work furthering a critical and emerging technology or other STEM area important to U.S. competitiveness; and
- The person is well positioned to advance the proposed STEM endeavor of national importance.

See *USCIS Policy Manual*, *supra*, at F.5(D)(2).

to the treatment of [] disorders and publishing influential research findings. Based on the Petitioner's track record of successful research and the significance of her proposed work to advance U.S. public health interests, we conclude that she offers contributions of such value that, on balance, they would benefit the United States even assuming that other qualified U.S. workers are available. The Petitioner, therefore, meets the third prong of the *Dhanasar* framework.

III. CONCLUSION

The Petitioner has met the requisite three prongs set forth in the *Dhanasar* analytical framework. We conclude that she has established she is eligible for and otherwise merits a national interest waiver as a matter of discretion.

ORDER: The appeal is sustained.