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Regulatory Management Div U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
Department of Homeland Security
111 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service:

I oppose the proposed increases in USCIS service fees. Such increases will disrupt family unity, further victimize vulnerable populations, and be economically infeasible for low-income immigrants.

While I agree that service quality should be improved to eliminate the backlog and remedy misplaced cases (up to 110,000 as estimated by the GAO), this burden should not be borne solely by immigrants who are already struggling to cover agency payments. Immigrants paying these fees are law-abiding individuals who pay taxes, contribute to their communities, speak English, and know American history. We all benefit from increases in legal immigration and citizenship - economically and culturally.

I am especially concerned with the burden that the proposed increases would place on families. Families are the backbone of our society. Our immigration policies should never prevent a mother from being with her children, or a husband from joining his wife. I especially oppose all fee increases that would jeopardize family reunification, noting particularly I-129F, I-130, I-600/A, and I-187.

The integrity of families should not be sacrificed in a "business decision" - USCIS officials' justification for the fee increases. Besides, government services lack the price-control mechanisms present in competitive markets.

Under this new fee structure, an individual earning minimum wage would have to save an entire month's pay in order to file an adjustment of status application (\$1,370, up from \$180). Faced with the proposed \$595 fee (up from \$330) for a naturalization application, parents should not have to choose which child can apply for citizenship versus another.

I commend USCIS for eliminating fees for certain interim benefits and initial applications for T-visas (I-914) and VAWA qualifying individuals. However, these vulnerable populations would still suffer from the proposed changes. Victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence are often in desperate financial situations. Should these increases take effect, many could not afford to adjust their status, apply for work permits, or reunify their families, and could face deportation or elongated detention.

Rather than enacting these fee increases, USCIS should work with Congress to create an alternative and permanent funding stream for immigration services. No law prohibits USCIS from diversifying its revenue through

congressional appropriations, which has been accomplished in the past. Officials also should take into account various alternatives to detention and deportation that would prove more cost effective and less harmful to families and communities in the United States.

On a personal note, I have been an English tutor for an immigrant woman from Panama for the past two years and learned a lot about her experiences with the immigration system. It took her and her family 10 years and thousands of dollars to finally receive their green cards last year. These are hard-working and honest people eager to contribute - adding further financial burdens to the legal immigration process will make it even harder for families such as these to fully participate in the society to which they have contributed so much.

In the name of families, vulnerable populations and those seeking a better life, please do not enact the proposed USCIS fee increases.

Sincerely,

Alison Prevost