September 4, 2021

Consulate of the United States of America

## RE: Critical Infrastructure National Interest Exception to Presidential Proclamation 10199 for Mr. Sharath Byladakere Somashekariah

Dear Sir or Madam:

Amazon.com Services, LLC (Amazon-US), a wholly owned subsidiary of Amazon.com, Inc., submits this letter in support of the request for an expedited visa processing appointment at the United States Consulate for a National Interest Exception to Presidential Proclamation 10199, so that Mr. Sharath Byladakere Somashekariah can travel from India to the United States to provide vital support and executive direction to critical infrastructure through his work at Amazon-US.

Mr. Sharath Byladakere Somashekariah has been employed as Business Intelligence Engineer III (BIE III or Sr. BIE) at Amazon-US since 2016. With over five years of experience, he is a key employee within the Amazon Alexa Connected Devices & Orchestration (CDO) organization, which comprises of about 260 individuals. CDO owns and operates the backbone operating system of Alexa, including the setup and control of every device connected to Alexa and the orchestration of every customer request to Alexa. Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah is the first and only BIE within CDO, and his work is directly connected to the company’s overall objectives to build critical AI based voice assistance infrastructure across the United States to generate higher revenue.

Amazon Alexa has played a vital role to the citizens of the United States during the Covid 19 pandemic as individuals spent increased durations of time at home. Some examples include staying connected with family face-to-face, dropping in on loved ones in need, obtaining critical information, finding nearby services, and staying entertained. More details can be found in the following link:

<https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/devices/some-of-the-many-ways-customers-are-using-alexa-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

<https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/devices/amazon-donating-5-million-in-devices-globally>

Within CDO, Mr. Byladakere Somashekaraiah is responsible to size, scope, build, and maintain Alexa’s data infrastructure, and to find relevant data sources, build data queries, store, transform data into a usable state, design and build dashboards, and analyze data patterns for the business teams and stakeholders to display and manage business-related data and make effective decisions. He also partners with Alexa-internal service and business teams to identify process and system improvement opportunities. Mr. Byladakere Somashekaraiah is essential to the Alexa CDO organization, which requires access to highly accurate data within a short period of time, and scalable mechanisms to extract, transform, aggregate and manipulate massive volumes of data in support of business-critical programs for multiple stakeholders and leadership.

Mr. Byladakere Somashekaraiah will continue to serve as a key leader for several critical projects for Amazon-US, including the following:

* **Alexa Connected Devices Data Infrastructure:** As part of the 2020-2022 initiative roadmap, Mr. Byladakere Somashekaraiah will be inventing the Alexa Connected Devices data infrastructure, including projects to 1) create a data infrastructure to host the required data and ensure its accuracy, 2) apply business rules and context to the hosted data to make the data meaningful, and display it to stakeholders and leadership 3) using statistical tools to create low-cost models to help solve business problems. This helps to take critical decisions to prioritize the right user experience for millions of Alexa customers.
* **Multi Agent Analytics:** “Powered by Alexa (PBA)” is a developer program to allow users to build their own voice assistants (agents) using Alexa’s stack, for a fee. PBA agents can license domains, rendering Alexa’s domain responses in their own, custom TTS voice. PBA agents can also “handoff” to Alexa, because the utterances for PBA agents flow through the same stack and systems as Alexa. Alexa Connected Devices needs the ability to measure the customers’ usage and the economic value of the various agents, compared to control cohorts on same device types, and agent’s quality (e.g. agent dialogs that end in failed utterances or non-purposeful “dead-ends”). This analytical data will help the Multi Agent team to understand the impact of the agents on Alexa customer and economic impact to Amazon from multi agents.
* **Multi-Device Adoption & Experience Dashboard:** Alexa routinely needs to collect data on multi-device spaces to inform prioritization decisions. To assist with this, Connected Devices leadership would like to turn simple queries into proper dashboards to allow leaders to get the answers in seconds rather than days.

As the position requires a highly technical combination of expertise, performing advanced engineering techniques using Amazon’s proprietary tools and technologies, this work cannot be performed remotely and his onsite presence is vital to remove bottlenecks and deliver the above-mentioned projects. Hence, it is necessary for Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah to travel back to the United States.

Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah’s travel is urgent because Amazon being the data driven company, without the data infrastructure he is building, critical decisions about Alexa infrastructure will be delayed which will impact millions of Alexa customers with a negative user experience. Hence his key and timely inputs are of paramount importance to lay a strong foundation for the system along with defining its long-term vision, while also maintaining economic viability for the projects.

Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah’s absence is causing Amazon financial hardship. It would require 6+ months to hire a new candidate for his position, excluding the training efforts to bring the new candidate up to speed. His work is estimated to have $2.3MM annual impact on Amazon, and his absence will be costing Amazon $200k per month, representing a substantial loss in opportunity and investment for Amazon-US.

Also, Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah was recently married in August and requires an L2 visa for his spouse. For new VISAs, a National Interest Exception is the mandatory requirement, without the NIE his spouse VISA is currently being held with 221G requesting for Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah’s NIE. Without his spouse’s VISA it may lead to family separation. Hence, please consider to provide the NIE based on humanitarian grounds of foreseeable family separation.

Based on this impact, Amazon-US respectfully requests a National Interest Exception to Presidential Proclamation 10199 for Mr. Byladakere Somashekariah, so that he can travel from India to work in the United States immediately to benefit the United States economic recovery and support critical infrastructure and also requests to help in granting L2 VISA for his wife.

Thank you for considering this request. Consular Officers can feel free to contact me if any additional information is required or would be helpful.

Very truly yours,

Tom Vessella

Principal Product Manager Tech, Alexa Connected Devices

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