



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
NETWORK, INC.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OPPOSING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE U.S CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION SERVICES FEE SCHEDULE AND CHANGES TO CERTAIN OTHER
IMMIGRATION BENEFIT REQUEST REQUIREMENTS**

TEMPLATE COMMENT - INSTRUCTIONS

Attached is a template to help RIS Clients draft a public comment in response to the administration's proposed rule on changes to the USCIS Fee Schedule. (The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is available [here](#).)

Why submit a public comment? When the government proposes a new rule, it is required (by the Administrative Procedure Act) to give the public an opportunity to read the rule and submit comments. The comment you submit will be public record and available for anyone to read. After the comment period closes, the government agency that proposed the rule must read all of the comments submitted, and consider the comments when drafting the final version of the rule. If the agency disregards substantive comments, the comments can be helpful to later litigation about the process followed in publishing the rule.

How do I submit a comment? You can submit comments online at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) [click [here](#) to go directly to the proposed rule]. Click on the "comment now" button and either enter your comment in the text box (must be fewer than 5,000 characters) or upload your comment as a PDF. CLINIC has published step-by-step commenting instructions that are available [here](#). Below are some important tips to keep in mind as you are drafting your comment.

Write comments in your own words. The template on the following pages is intended to help guide you and give you an example and ideas, but *the comment should be edited with your original words*. Feel free to delete whole sections or paragraphs and replace them with your organization's perspective on the issue. It is extremely important to use your own words as much as possible because the agency will bundle any comments that are too similar to each other, and they will consider this bundle as one comment, rather than as individual submissions.

To find your own words in drafting your comment, it may be helpful to do some research on your own program and practice, the demographics of your clients, and the local community. Consider what aspects of the rule would be particularly troublesome for international religious workers. Gather some numbers and statistics that you can use to demonstrate how many of your clients or people in your community will be affected, how and to what extent, and at what financial cost.

Attach research and supporting documents. If you cite to statistics or supporting documents in your comments, we recommend including them as an attachment so that they are clearly part of the administrative record. Another option is to include a live link to cited sources.

If you have experience in an issue area, say so. If you are a subject matter expert and want to offer comments on your area of expertise, explain why you are qualified to offer this perspective. Feel free to explain your educational and professional background, or attach a copy of your CV to your comment. If your faith motivates you to work with immigrants or requires you to advocate for immigrants, feel free to talk about your faith in your comment.

Provide contact information for a representative of the organization. Organizational comments should be signed by a representative of the organization, and provide the business contact information of the representative for any follow-up questions or concerns. However, keep in mind that this comment will be publicly available, so do not include personal addresses or cell phone numbers.

[DATE]

Submitted via Regulations.gov

Samantha Deshommes

Chief, Regulatory Coordination Division

Office of Policy and Strategy

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Department of Homeland Security

5900 Capital Gateway Drive, Camp Springs, MD 20746

Re: RIN 1615-AC68; DHS Docket No. USCIS-2021-0010-001; Public Comment on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule and Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Request Requirements

Dear Ms. Deshommes:

Our Organization, [NAME], respectfully submits this comment in response to the notice of proposed rule making that would revise the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services fee schedule. While appreciative of the agency's efforts to minimize fee increases to forms for naturalization and some humanitarian categories, several of the proposed changes would make applying for and maintaining lawful immigration status unaffordable for many immigrants, specifically our international religious workers.

[Organization Name's mission is . . . [describe the importance of international religious workers in your organization. If possible, include data to further this argument.]

[Organization] requests that DHS revise the proposed fee schedule in order to avoid creating barriers that prevent international religious workers from achieving or maintaining lawful status or obtaining citizenship.

Form I-129 Petition for Religious Workers Should Not Burden Religious Organizations

Our organization sponsors international religious workers in order to fulfill our mission. We are concerned that the proposed fee for the form I-129 petition category for religious workers would be excessively burdensome on the U.S. religious worker sponsor. Under the proposed fee schedule, religious worker petitions would have a filing fee increase from \$460 to \$1015. This is a staggering 121 percent change; one of the highest percentage increases for nonimmigrant workers. These fee increases would disproportionately affect small religious organizations, parishes, and communities that serve a charitable function in our society. International religious workers provide vital services for the health and well-being of communities throughout the United States. Filing fee adjustments for the religious worker program should heavily weigh the non-profit nature of the sponsor.

Adjustment of Status and Related Applications Should Remain Bundled and Affordable

DHS proposes separate fees for concurrently filed Forms I-485, I-765, and I-131. Most applicants who will file Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, will file Form I-765, [Application for Employment Authorization](#) and [Form I-131, Application for Travel Document](#). Due to immigrant visa backlogs and increased USCIS processing times, adjustment applicants often face long waits before their lawful permanent residence status is granted. Applicants rely on employment authorization to continue to live and work in the United States while their application is pending. Applicants filing Forms I-485, I-765, and I-131 on paper will see a 130 percent increase in initial filing costs, changing significantly from \$1225 to \$2820. An applicant who chooses not to seek travel authorization, and files only paper Forms I-485 and I-765, would pay \$2190 in fees, a 79 percent increase in initial filing costs. These steep fee increases will pose a significant financial burden and may make adjustment of status unattainable for many international religious workers.

Serious Concerns Regarding Online Filing Inefficiencies and Online Filing Fees

DHS has proposed an expansion of online filing of additional forms. We urge DHS to make the USCIS online filing system more user-friendly and re-design it in a way that overcomes serious technical issues and glitches that affect it.

DHS has proposed the creation of higher fees for certain forms filed on paper versus online. The creation of higher paper filing fees disadvantages religious workers who lack the means or access to file forms and supporting documents online, the very applicants who are least able to afford a higher fee. Notably, the issue of access includes not only a lack of internet or computer access but

also the issue of sufficient literacy to complete an online process accurately and effectively. Applicants, beneficiaries, and petitioners should not be penalized for any inability to file online.

Form N-400 Application for Naturalization Should Be Affordable

DHS is proposing a 5% increase in the cost of Form N-400. We recognize and appreciate that this proposed fee increase is modest compared to others in this fee schedule and that the \$760 fee for the N-400 will include the biometrics fee. However, this increase will still impact many applicants who already face difficulty in affording the current application fee but do not qualify for a full or partial fee waiver. For lawful permanent residents who hope to naturalize, facing the hurdle of being unable to afford the application fee can be a major deterrence. DHS should eliminate any increase to the naturalization fee to avoid creating additional burdens that may prevent eligible immigrants from achieving U.S. citizenship.

[If you have any particular case stories or data/information that would shed light on how these increases would affect your organization, add that information here.]

Conclusion

The extremely high fee increases will make it harder for U.S. religious organizations to bring religious workers to the U.S. Many will decide they can no longer afford to bring religious workers to the U.S. or will not have the additional resources to continue their indispensable work in our communities. These extremely high additional immigration costs will negatively impact the very missions and community work the religious organizations seek to perform. Such an effect is contrary to the traditions and respect this country holds for faith and religion and will have substantial consequences on the communities they serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed changes.

Sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE HERE]

Name

Title

Organization