



Submitted via Regulations.gov

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Office of Policy and Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security

RE: RIN 1615-AC78; DHS Docket No. USCIS-2022-0002; Public Comment on Temporary Increase of the Automatic Extension Period of Employment Authorization and Documentation for Certain Renewal Applicants

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc (CLINIC) submits these comments regarding the current [Temporary Final Rule](#) (TFR) issued on May 3, 2022 that increases the automatic extension period for Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) from 180 to 540 days. CLINIC strongly supports this measure.

Embracing the Gospel value of welcoming the stranger, CLINIC has promoted the dignity and protected the rights of immigrants in partnership with a dedicated network of Catholic and community legal immigration programs since its founding in 1988. CLINIC's network, originally comprised of 17 programs, has now increased to more than 450 diocesan and community-based programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia. CLINIC is the largest nationwide network of nonprofit immigration programs. Through its affiliates, CLINIC advocates for the just and humane treatment of noncitizens by providing legal services to low-income immigrants and creating and disseminating educational materials for their local communities. CLINIC supports these efforts by conducting trainings, producing written materials, and providing in-depth technical assistance to member organizations regarding immigration law, including on issues regarding employment authorization.

Prior to the adoption of the TFR, CLINIC received numerous inquiries from its affiliates regarding how best to assist clients whose 180-day auto-extension was due to expire. In many cases, the noncitizen clients had filed for a renewal of employment authorization months in advance of the expiration. Even then, the lengthy processing times for EADs of ten to eleven months meant that clients were at risk of experiencing a gap in their employment authorization. Any gap in employment authorization can prove devastating for clients. It can lead to their being unable to renew a driver's license or continue working at their job. Many of the individuals experiencing the worst delays in processing were vulnerable asylum seekers who were the sole source of financial support for their families.

The failure to decide EAD applications in a timely fashion was also impacting CLINIC affiliates. Most representatives at CLINIC affiliates carry a heavy caseload and have limited resources in how many clients they can assist. These overburdened representatives were forced to resort to time consuming measures, such as expedite requests, assistance through the USCIS Ombudsman's office, or Congressional inquiries. These additional efforts often proved fruitless in yielding a timely response from USCIS.

CLINIC strongly supports the introduction of this TFR as a common-sense, temporary measure while the agency works to improve its processing times. Vulnerable immigrants, especially asylum seekers, should not pay the price for the agency's failure to act in a timely fashion. These individuals will no longer have to worry about losing their jobs and their ability to support themselves and their families due to USCIS's failure to act on their applications within a reasonable period. Their representatives will no longer have to expend valuable resources on expedite requests or Congressional inquiries. We are grateful for the agency's efforts in this area and look forward to continued work to improve overall processing times across USCIS.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Sardone (msardone@cliniclegal.org) should you have any questions about our comments or require further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anna Gallagher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna Gallagher
Executive Director