

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 3, 2023

Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Director Jaddou,

We are concerned about the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) recent proposed rule entitled, “U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Fee Schedule Changes to Certain Other Immigration Benefit Require Requirements,” which outlines a massive increase in fees for traveling artists, including touring musicians. We urge you not to move forward with the proposed 260 and 251 percent increase in fees for O and P visas respectively, which would have a devastating impact on our local creative economies.

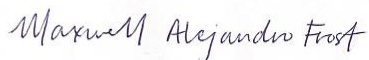
Arts and cultural organizations, artists, venues, and the wider creative sector are not only vital to local economies across the United States but contribute to the growth and wellbeing of our communities. Despite being anchors institutions and that contribute greatly to their communities, most arts entities operate on very slim margins. As the arts economy works to recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued high costs, delays, and unpredictability of visa processing has contributed to a difficult recovery for the sector.

The proposed rule would increase petition fees for O visas from \$460 to \$1,655 and for P visas from \$460 to \$1,615 per request. We, alongside thousands of artists and arts organizations who have raised their voice on in opposition to the proposal, know that fee increases of this magnitude would devastate local arts organizations and make it impossible for them to engage with international artists.

We understand that your stated intention is to use the increased revenue to, “fund operating costs associated with administering nation’s legal immigration system.” We strongly support the shared priority of addressing asylum caseloads, backlog reduction, and refugee processing. We understand that an increase in fees may be necessary, but we reject this false choice that increasing that cost of accessing music and culture is the only way to decrease the backlog. Further, implementing this dramatic fee increase would result in a sharp decline in artists seeking visas, which could leave the same immigration programs unfunded all over again. We urge you to reconsider these dramatic fee increases directed at O and P visas and to instead diversify your revenue source to fund important activities to support our nation’s immigrants.

Many arts entities are concerned that their ability to afford these fees has been significantly overestimated in the proposed rule and are alarmed at the prospect of visa fees more than tripling in size. We urge you to reconsider. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Daniel S. Goldman
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Nydia Velazquez
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress