

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 13, 2026

The Honorable Joseph B. Edlow
Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
5900 Capital Gateway Drive
Camp Springs, MD 20746

Dear Director Edlow:

We write regarding the proposed rule issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on June 23, 2026. That proposed rule would substantially increase naturalization fees and eliminate the reduced-fee option and fee waivers. These changes will place U.S. citizenship out of reach for many low-income lawful permanent residents who are otherwise eligible to naturalize.

Under the proposed rule, an applicant seeking U.S. citizenship would face fee increases of up to 80 percent and up to an 83 percent increase for a hearing on a decision in naturalization proceedings. The proposed rule would also eliminate both the reduced-fee option and the fee-waiver provision for non-military applicants. While your agency asserts that the increased fees are necessary to recover the full cost of adjudicating naturalization applications and to support enhanced screening and vetting measures, it fails to address the increased fees' deterrent effect on eligible applicants, particularly those from low-income communities. The proposed rule does not demonstrate that USCIS considered applicants' reliance interests, evaluated reasonable alternatives that would preserve access to naturalization, or adequately justified why naturalization applicants should bear the costs of expanded adjudicatory processes.

USCIS's actions have repeatedly increased the burden of and difficulty in obtaining U.S. citizenship. In addition to these proposed fees, your agency increased the difficulty of the civics test that individuals must take to become citizens. You also eliminated the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program that helps immigrants navigate the process. Naturalization is a critical pathway to immigrant integration, civic engagement, and democratic participation, yet your agency's actions represent a significant departure from these values.

To fulfill our Congressional oversight responsibilities, we respectfully request that you provide written answers to the following questions by August 25th:

1. What analysis did your agency conduct regarding the impact of moving from an ability-to-pay framework to a strict beneficiary-pays model? Please include any analysis your agency conducted on the broader public benefits of naturalization, the equity implications, and how these factors were weighed in establishing the proposed fees.
2. What analysis did your agency conduct regarding the anticipated impact of the proposed fee increases on low-income communities? Please include any estimates of how many otherwise eligible lawful permanent residents may be unable to apply for naturalization or may delay filing as a result of the fee increases. Please also provide any assessment of

the impacts on legal service providers, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders assisting applicants with the naturalization process.

3. What specific pre- and post-approval screening and vetting processes are needed by the agency for naturalization adjudications that necessitated the increased fees? Please also include the following:
 - a. The authority requiring such processes, including whether the additional processing is required by a specific Executive Order, statute, or policy change within the agency;
 - b. Whether and how these processes are authorized to be funded through Immigration Examinations Fee Account (IEFA) funds;
 - c. The costs associated with each process;
 - d. Whether those costs are directly attributable to individual naturalization adjudications; and
 - e. What alternatives were considered by the agency before proposing the fee increases.
4. What USCIS personnel responsible for naturalization adjudication and processing have been terminated, reassigned, or otherwise removed since January 2025? Of that number, how many positions have been refilled? Please also detail any reductions in USCIS funding or resources related to application processing, backlog reduction, or naturalization adjudications since January 2025.

We should not price citizenship outside the reach of immigrants; instead, we should explore ways to encourage individuals to fulfill the American Dream. If you have any questions, please reach out to my staff.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



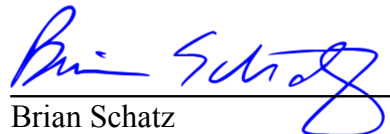
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



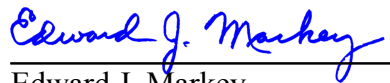
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



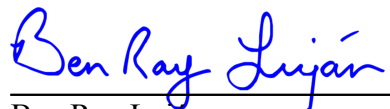
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator