

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Calls on USCIS to address backlog for refugees seeking work authorizations

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) sent a letter today urging the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to immediately address the existing backlog for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees seeking their employment authorization document (EAD). Many refugees in Wisconsin and across the country are currently struggling to provide for their families as they face months-long wait times for their applications to be processed.

“Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in Wisconsin are facing unacceptably long waits for EADs necessary for them to provide financially for their families and fully integrate in their new communities,” **Senator Baldwin wrote.** “Communities across the state of Wisconsin have banded together to welcome Ukrainian and Afghan refugees fleeing instability and violence. We owe it to these communities, and the refugees they have welcomed, to help these migrants find the work and fill job openings that will help them contribute to and fully integrate into these communities.”

As of September 26, USCIS estimates a processing time of 7 months for the I-765 application categories that frequently apply to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, 4 months longer than its 3-month cycle time goal. Senator Baldwin is also supportive of Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patrick Leahy’s request for an additional \$457 million in USCIS funding for FY2023 to further reduce processing times.

Full text of the letter can be found below or [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).

Dear Director Jaddou:

I write to express concern regarding ongoing employment authorization document (EAD) processing backlogs at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and to urge immediate action to address the adverse effects of these backlogs on Afghan and Ukrainian refugees and the communities in Wisconsin where they now live.

Wisconsin welcomed individuals and families fleeing Afghanistan and Ukraine with the assistance of Wisconsin's six refugee resettlement agencies. These agencies, in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, help connect refugees with the resources they need to acclimate to entirely new surroundings and integrate into their new local communities. While these agencies serve an invaluable role, they rely on the work of USCIS and other federal agencies to connect refugees to the documentation and authorizations necessary to obtain legal work. Afghan and Ukrainian refugees in Wisconsin are facing unacceptably long waits for EADs necessary for them to provide financially for their families and fully integrate in their new communities.

As of September 26, USCIS estimates a processing time of 7 months for the I-765 application categories that frequently apply to Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, 4 months longer than its 3-month cycle time goal. I appreciate the steps that USCIS has taken to reduce processing times, including extending work authorizations for permit renewals and streamlining work authorization processing for Afghan evacuees. Nevertheless, these delays persist and continue to impede Afghan and Ukrainian refugees seeking to contribute to Wisconsin communities. I support Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Leahy's Chairman's mark for FY2023 USCIS funding, which would include an additional \$457 million above the fiscal year 2022 funding level to further reduce processing times. This funding, paired with additional investments and accountability requirements included in the FY2022 funding bill, should position USCIS well to further reduce EAD wait times.

Communities across the state of Wisconsin have banded together to welcome Ukrainian and Afghan refugees fleeing instability and violence. We owe it to these communities, and the refugees they have welcomed, to help these migrants find the work and fill job openings that will help them contribute to and fully integrate into these communities. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please communicate any additional resources that USCIS needs to help meet its 3-month cycle time goal.



Sincerely,

Tammy Baldwin

United States Senator