

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Kristi Noem  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Noem:

We write to strongly condemn your unilateral move to pause issuing all immigrant visas for 75 countries.<sup>1</sup> This is an outrageous, and discriminatory policy decision by your Administration impacting nearly 40% of all countries. It is also stunning that such a drastic policy change impacting hundreds of thousands of people a year would be announced not only by tweet, but also without offering any meaningful information about the “pause.” As listed by the State Department, the countries impacted include:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Cote d’Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, North Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

Because the policy applies to all immigrant visas, it affects immediate relatives of U.S citizens as well as all family-sponsored visas, employer-sponsored, religious workers, diversity, and returning residents visas. According to the State Department, these 75 countries had accounted for approximately 243,671 immigrant visas in FY23,<sup>2</sup> 280,015 in FY24,<sup>3</sup> and 189,583 from October through May of FY25.<sup>4</sup> Experts say the indefinite pause will turn away almost half of all legal immigrants over the next year. An analysis of visas issued over the last three years show people from the countries affected account for 40 to 45 percent of all immigrant visas.<sup>5</sup>

Our Congressional Districts represent individuals from all the countries listed by the State Department’s announcement. This discriminatory policy will have a devastating impact on our constituents. It will separate families and prevent them from uniting, block individuals from pursuing the American Dream, stifle small business growth, and undermine faith-based organizations’ ability to build and sustain their communities. In short, this policy is backwards, antiquated and does significantly more harm than good.

<sup>1</sup> @StateDept. “The State Department will pause immigrant visa processing from 75 countries whose migrants take welfare from the American people at unacceptable rates. The freeze will remain active until the U.S. can ensure that new immigrants will not extract wealth from the American people.” X, 14 Jan. 2026, 11:40 a.m. [x.com/StateDept/status/2011478657680757214](https://x.com/StateDept/status/2011478657680757214).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2023.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2023.html). Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2024.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2024.html). Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/immigrant-visa-statistics/monthly-immigrant-visa-issuances.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/immigrant-visa-statistics/monthly-immigrant-visa-issuances.html). Accessed 16 Jan. 2026.

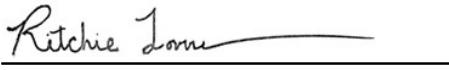
<sup>5</sup> Kirkpatrick, N., and Nick Mourtoupalas. “Immigration Visas for People from 75 Countries Are Paused.” *Washington Post*, Washington Post, 21 Jan. 2026, [www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/01/21/immigration-visas-75-countries-paused/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/01/21/immigration-visas-75-countries-paused/).

As such we request you provide the following information no later than February 20, 2026:

1. The State Department has claimed that “The Trump Administration is bringing an end to the abuse of America’s immigration system by those who would extract wealth from the American people.”<sup>6</sup> As such, does the Administration have the data to back up this claim to justify this policy?
2. What is the legal justification for the Department’s action?
3. According to the Department of State, this pause is necessary to ensure that immigrants from these countries do not become a public charge. Public charge has long been an inadmissibility ground under the Immigration and Nationality Act, and the agencies – Department of State and Department of Homeland Security – know how to conduct individualized assessments of applicants to determine whether they are likely to become a public charge. Why does the Administration now need a blanket pause on all applicants?
4. Considering you believe this policy will save Americans money, even though our country benefits from net migration, have your Departments conducted a cost-benefit analysis of this policy? If so, we ask that you submit the analysis to Congress.
5. The State Department’s announcement states that it “is undergoing a full review of all policies, regulations, and guidance to ensure that immigrants from these high-risk countries do not utilize welfare in the United States or become a public charge.” When does the Department believe this “review” will be completed, and if there will be additional exemptions added to this policy?<sup>7</sup>

We are all deeply disturbed by this policy decision, and strongly encourage you to reverse the policy.

Sincerely,

  
Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

  
Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

  
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

<sup>6</sup> Williams, Abigail. “U.S. to Stop Issuing Immigrant Visas for 75 Countries.” NBCNews.Com, NBCUniversal News Group, 15 Jan. 2026, [www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/us-stop-issuing-visas-75-countries-rcna254039](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/us-stop-issuing-visas-75-countries-rcna254039).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/immigrant-visa-processing-updates-for-nationalities-at-high-risk-of-public-benefits-usage.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/immigrant-visa-processing-updates-for-nationalities-at-high-risk-of-public-benefits-usage.html). Accessed 15 Jan. 2026.

Eleanor H. Norton

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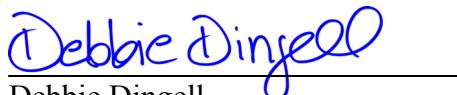
George Latimer  
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Danny K. Davis

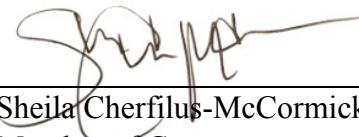
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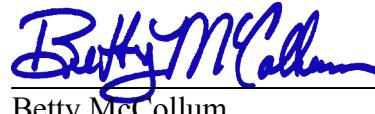
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Rashida Tlaib  
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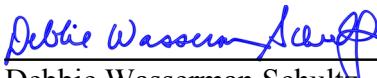
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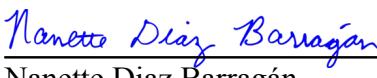
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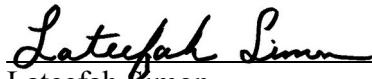
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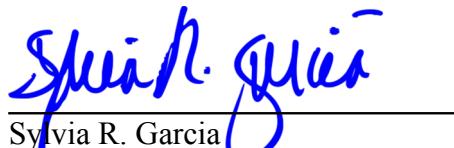
Marc A. Veasey  
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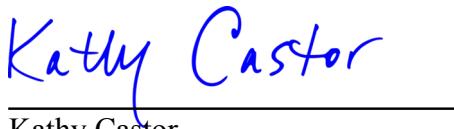
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Jimmy Gomez  
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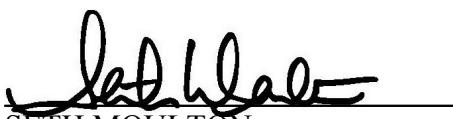
Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



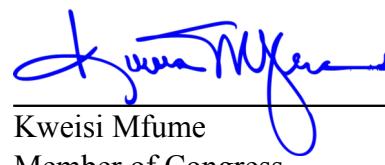
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David Scott  
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Kweisi Mfume  
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April McClain Delaney  
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Gabe Amo  
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Sarah McBride  
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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



Adelita S. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier

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