

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

June 10, 2016

The Honorable Leon Rodriguez
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
Office of the Director (MS 2000)
Washington, DC 20529-0001

Dear Director Rodríguez:

I am writing to bring to your attention an issue that is of great concern to me regarding the manner by which the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) conducts biometric intake and interviews in the State of Hawaii.

As an island state, Hawaii faces unique challenges not found in the 48 contiguous states. For example, air transportation is the only option for passenger travel from island to island and the cost of interisland flights can range from \$160 to over \$400.

Currently, individuals who require biometric intake and interview services must travel to Honolulu on the island of Oahu to conduct business with the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services. The cost factor of air transportation for neighbor island residents is in addition to the time off from work or school, and USCIS processing fees. Combined, these factors present a substantial burden on immigrants, their families, and particularly for women. As, USCIS only gives one week's notice for a biometric intake appointment, individuals pay premium prices for last-minute airfare.

Hawaii is among the top five states with the highest share of immigrants in their population. Approximately 75,000 immigrants live on the neighbor islands. The majority of Hawaii's immigrants are women, and immigrant women who have not yet naturalized earn approximately \$8,500 less than foreign-born naturalized women.

Prior to 2009, USCIS provided mobile biometric services on a quarterly basis to residents on Kauai, Maui, Hilo and Kailua-Kona. Since the termination of the mobile biometric services, social service providers on the neighbor islands report immigrant clients not being able to renew their green cards. The termination of the mobile biometric services not only affects those with immigrant visas, but also young people eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). The difficulties caused by the termination of the mobile biometric services compounds an earlier decision by USCIS to terminate quarterly interview services on the neighbor islands in 2007. These two actions leave individuals throughout the state with no option but to come to the USCIS in Honolulu to conduct business.

WASHINGTON, D.C. OFFICE:
330 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-6361



HAWAII OFFICE:
PRINCE JONAH KUHIO KALANIANA'OLE FEDERAL BUILDING
300 ALA MOANA BOULEVARD, RM 3-106
HONOLULU, HI 96850
(808) 522-8970



I write to ask that USCIS reinstate its mobile biometric services on Hawaii's neighbor islands. This decision will allow USCIS to provide services in an equitable manner to individuals throughout the state and ease the financial burden faced by already vulnerable immigrant families.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mazie K. Hirono". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "H".

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator