

MONICA DE LA CRUZ
FIFTEENTH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES
RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CREDIT

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
VICE CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

July 30th, 2026

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The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mullin,

I write to urge the prioritization of religious worker visa applications. Churches and faith-based institutions serve as the foundation of our communities, and our religious leaders as an extension of our families. Our immigration system recognizes this by allowing for those in religious vocations to serve in the United States, including through the R-1 religious worker visas.

In January 2026, the Trump Administration acted to reduce wait times for religious workers seeking to continue serving our faith-based communities in the United States. Specifically, your department removed the previous one-year foreign residency requirement, allowing R-1 workers who have reached the five-year maximum to seek readmission without a mandatory one-year period abroad.¹

While we commend the actions taken to speed up the immigration process for our religious workers, I urge you to prioritize reducing the processing times for religious worker visa applications, which U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data states have processing times of 8.5 and 11.5 months, respectively,² depending on the applicant type.³

These processing delays are felt throughout our communities, which rely on our religious leaders for vital religious and community services. I urge you to use your available resources to reduce the processing timelines, and stand ready to assist you in any way necessary.

¹ Under current regulations, R-1 religious workers may receive an initial period of admission of up to 30 months, with one extension of up to an additional 30 months, for a statutory maximum of five-years.

² USCIS states that 80% of cases for a Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker (I-129) at Service Center Operations (SCOPS) are completed within 8.5 months for religious occupations as of July 30, 2026; USCIS states that 80% of cases for a Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant (I-360) at SCOPS are completed within 11.5 months for religious workers as of July 30, 2026.

³ Form I-129 is used by U.S. employers to petition for nonimmigrant workers, including R-1 visa applications for religious workers, which are for temporary work as a minister or in a religious vocation; Form I-360 is used to petition for special immigrant statuses, including permanent special immigrant religious workers.

Thank you for your continued efforts to safeguard our country and support the diverse faith communities that enrich our society. I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that our immigration system functions in a way that strengthens religious freedom, supports the rule of law, and provides certainty for the communities we serve.

Sincerely,



Monica De La Cruz
Member of Congress
15th District of Texas

cc: Stephen Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, The White House
Vince Haley, Director of the Domestic Policy Council, The White House