

July 26, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

Manufacturing in the United States depends on a strong, skilled workforce to innovate and grow our economy, and foreign-born individuals have long played an important role in contributing to our industry's success. That success is now in jeopardy due to the green card backlog we are facing. The backlog is exacerbating the manufacturing workforce crisis, stifling American competitiveness and innovation and hampering economic growth. In addition, basic processing delays at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for employment-based immigrant visas are adding to the frustrations of both employers and current and prospective workers. With many green cards likely to go unused by the end of the fiscal year this September, manufacturers respectfully ask that the Department of Homeland Security remove the bureaucratic red tape that is preventing talented individuals from being part and remaining in the modern manufacturing workforce at this critical time.

Nearly 45% of manufacturers in a recent Manufacturers' Outlook Survey fielded by the National Association of Manufacturers reported that they had to forego business opportunities because they did not have enough employees.¹ Currently, for every 100 job openings in America, there are 53 people looking for work. This labor shortage persists even though wage growth for production and nonsupervisory manufacturing workers is at a 40-year high.² And this is not a short-term challenge: a study conducted by The Manufacturing Institute—the workforce development and education partner of the NAM—and Deloitte found that the industry will likely need to fill 4 million manufacturing jobs by 2030, but 2.1 million could go unfilled under current conditions. These unfilled jobs could cost the economy \$1 trillion in 2030 alone.³

Foreign-born individuals play a key role in addressing our labor needs. Currently, 70% of STEM graduates from U.S. institutions are from outside the country.⁴ Retaining this U.S.-educated talent on our shores is difficult because there is no clear path to permanent residency or citizenship for this population. Green cards permanently allow these individuals to live and work in the United States, but the backlog only adds to ongoing immigration challenges and complications. The number of backlogged green cards is approximately 10 times the total number of employment-based green cards available each year.⁵

Addressing the green card backlog and providing green cards to hardworking and talented immigrants in the manufacturing workforce is an important step to address the current workforce crisis and support a stronger economy. Manufacturing companies in the U.S. have already trained and invested in many of the people caught in the green card backlog. These individuals are facing an uncertain future because of the bureaucratic quagmire.

We believe that DHS can do more to prioritize its resources and focus on meeting the critical workforce needs. Processing delays at USCIS resulted in approximately 66,500 employment-based green cards going unused in FY2021.⁶ USCIS attributes these delays to its own labor shortages, the closure of offices and other COVID-19 pandemic-related challenges. We understand USCIS has faced labor challenges like so many businesses. This year can be different, though. The FY2022 omnibus bill provided the agency with an additional approximately \$200 million in funding, a portion of which can be used to address the persistent delays.

With the workforce crisis contributing to inflationary pressures and economic uncertainty, we truly cannot afford to let more green cards go to waste and leave talented individuals who contribute to our economy on the sidelines. As DHS addresses the issues, we stand ready to work with you to strengthen the manufacturing workforce and bolster our economy.

Sincerely,



Jay Timmons

Cc: Speaker Pelosi, Republican Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer and Republican Leader McConnell