



Submitted via email to: OMB USCIS Desk Officer, dhsdeskofficer@omb.eop.gov

May 21, 2019

Samantha Deshommes
Chief, Regulatory Coordination Division
Office of Policy and Strategy
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20529-2140

RE: OMB Control Number 1615-0050; USCIS; Agency Information Collection Activities; Revision of a Currently Approved Collection: Request for Hearing on a Decision in Naturalization Proceedings Under Section 336

Dear Chief Deshommes:

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) respectfully submits the following comments related to proposed changes to Form N-336. These comments are based on the expertise of CLINIC's staff, who have extensive experience developing tools and resources regarding the naturalization process and assisting individual applicants for naturalization, as well as insights from our affiliates who regularly provide naturalization services to individual applicants.

CLINIC supports a national network of community-based legal immigration service programs that primarily serve low-income immigrants and regularly advise and assist individuals in filing family-based applications, naturalization applications, humanitarian forms of relief, and more. The network includes approximately 370 affiliated immigration programs, which operate out of more than 400 offices in 49 states. CLINIC's network employs an estimated 2,300 staff, including attorneys and accredited representatives who, in turn, serve hundreds of thousands of low-income immigrants each year. According to our 2017 survey of our affiliates, 96 percent of survey respondents provided legal services in naturalization and citizenship. Our affiliates specialize in representing vulnerable applicants, and have a great deal of experience assisting people with disabilities in the naturalization process.

USCIS has proposed to delete in its entirety Part 5, Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities or Impairments, on the Form N-336 and to delete this part from the form instructions as well. Part 5 provides the opportunity for applicants who are deaf, blind, or have another significant disability to indicate any reasonable accommodations needed in the N-336 application process or interview. In November 2018, USCIS similarly proposed to delete the part for requesting accommodations on the Form N-400. These omissions in combination with USCIS' recent changes to the N-648 guidance regarding medical certification of disability set a very troubling pattern of disadvantaging those with disabilities in the naturalization process.

USCIS is required to provide reasonable accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The purpose of accommodations is to ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any federal government program. Accommodations enable persons with disabilities to participate in the naturalization process.

If USCIS decides to implement these proposed changes, applicants with disabilities may not know that accommodations are available to them or how to apply for them. These proposed changes would severely limit applicants' ability to obtain the accommodations needed to participate in the naturalization process, and may prevent them from naturalizing. According to its policy, "USCIS makes every effort to provide accommodations to persons with disabilities."¹ Removing instructions and methods for indicating a need for accommodations is not consistent with USCIS' stated dedication to complying with the Rehabilitation Act.

CLINIC very strongly recommends that USCIS restore the sections of Form N-336 and instructions assisting applicants with disabilities to understand how to apply for accommodations in order to comply with its own policy and the Rehabilitation Act.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me at jbussey@cliniclegal.org with any questions or concerns about our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Marie Bussey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Marie Bussey, Esq.
Advocacy Director
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

¹ See USCIS Policy Manual, Volume 1, Part A, Chapter 6, Disability Accommodation Requests.