



## DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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For Immediate Release  
November 8, 2019

News Release 2019-80

### **Hawaii Attorney General Urges the Federal Government to Withdraw Its Proposal Obstructing Asylum-Seekers' Ability to Access Work Permits**

HONOLULU – Attorney General Clare E. Connors today joined a coalition of 19 attorneys general, led by California and New Jersey, in filing a comment letter opposing a Trump Administration proposal that would significantly hinder the ability of asylum-seekers to access work permits. Currently, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has 30 days to review asylum-seekers' work permit applications following their submission. However, under the proposed rule, USCIS would completely eliminate that timeframe, forcing asylum-seekers to potentially wait indefinitely to find out if they will be authorized to work. The Trump Administration's proposal would directly harm communities and it ignores the vital economic contributions of immigrants throughout the country.

"This proposal makes it harder for asylum-seekers to obtain legal work," said Attorney General Connors. "It serves no legitimate purpose but further marginalizes those who want to contribute to the community."

Delaying decisions on work permits harms asylum-seekers and their families by preventing them from finding work, potentially making it more difficult for them to adjust to life in the United States. Under the current system, asylum-seekers can apply for a work permit or Employment Authorization Document if their asylum application has been pending for 150 days. Once they file their application for employment authorization, USCIS must act on it within 30 days. Currently, 96 percent of work permit applications are handled within the regulatory timeframe. Nevertheless, USCIS is seeking to create further delays in the existing system. In fact, the proposed rule would result in a 21 percent drop in timely adjudications, which according to USCIS' own estimates would result in up to nearly \$775 million in lost compensation annually. Forcing asylum-seekers to wait even longer than they currently do before being able to legally work will negatively affect the economy. Immigrant households contribute billions of dollars in state and local taxes every year and play an integral role in the economy.

The proposed rule also threatens asylum-seekers and their families by making them more likely to seek work through exploitative employers in the underground economy. Moreover, asylum-seekers without a stable income source are less likely to be able to hire an attorney, which can disrupt their ability to successfully establish a legitimate asylum claim.

In filing the comment letter, Attorney General Connors joins the attorneys general of California, New Jersey, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia.

A copy of the comment letter is available [here](#).

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