

programs, regulations, and/or policies be modified, expanded, streamlined, or repealed to deliver resources and benefits more equitably?

(2) Are there FEMA programs, regulations, and/or policies that do not bolster resilience to impacts of climate change, particularly for those disproportionately impacted by climate change, and, if so, what are they? How can those programs, regulations, and/or policies be modified, expanded, streamlined, or repealed to bolster resilience to the impacts of climate change?

(3) Are there FEMA programs, regulations, and/or policies that do not promote environmental justice? How can those programs, regulations, and/or policies be modified, expanded, streamlined, or repealed to promote environmental justice?

(4) Are there FEMA programs, regulations, and/or policies that are unnecessarily complicated or could be streamlined to achieve the objectives of equity for all (including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality), bolstering resilience to climate change, or addressing the disproportionately high and adverse climate-related impacts on disadvantaged communities in more efficient ways? If so, what are they and how can they be made less complicated and/or streamlined?

(5) Are there any FEMA regulations and/or policies that create duplication, overlap, complexity, or inconsistent requirements within FEMA programs, other DHS components, or any other Federal Government agency that impact equity, resilience to the effects of climate change, and/or environmental justice? If so, what are they and how can they be improved or updated to meet the required objectives of equity, resiliency, and environmental justice?

(6) Does FEMA currently collect information, use forms, or require documentation that impede access to FEMA programs and/or are not effective to achieve statutory, regulatory, and/or program objectives? If so, what are they and how can FEMA revise them to reduce burden, save time or costs, increase simplification and navigability, reduce confusion or frustration, and increase equity in access to FEMA programs and achieving statutory and/or regulatory objectives?

(7) Are there FEMA regulations and/or policies that have been overtaken by technological developments? Can FEMA leverage new technologies to modify, streamline, or do away with existing regulatory and/or policy requirements?

If so, what are they and how can FEMA use new technologies to achieve its statutory and regulatory objectives in light of the Executive orders cited?

(8) Are there any FEMA regulations and/or policies that are duplicative, overlapping, or contain inconsistent requirements generally? Are there areas where FEMA's regulations create duplicative, overlapping, or difficult to navigate situations for individuals also navigating regulatory requirements of another Federal Government agency?

(9) Are there existing sources of data that FEMA can use to evaluate the post-promulgation effects of regulations over time? Or, are there sources of data that FEMA can use to evaluate the effects of FEMA policies or regulations on equity for all, including individuals who belong to underserved communities?

(10) What successful approaches to advance equity and climate resilience have been taken by State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, and in what ways do FEMA's programs present barriers or opportunities to successful implementation of these approaches?

(11) Are there FEMA regulations, programs, or processes that create barriers to mitigation, response, recovery, or resilience for a specific industry or sector of the economy, geographic location within the United States, or government type (e.g. a specific tribal or territorial government or a specific local government)?

In addition to these general questions, FEMA seeks specific input on the programs described above.

Specific Questions

(1) Individual Assistance: Are there regulations and/or policies that act as a barrier to people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty, inequality, and climate change?

(2) Public Assistance: Are there measures FEMA could take to more effectively bolster or incentivize resilience to the impacts of climate change?

(3) National Flood Insurance Program: Are there regulations and/or policies that disincentivize purchasing flood insurance, particularly by lower-income communities, communities of color, and Tribal communities? Are there measures FEMA could take to increase nationwide the number of flood-insured homes in the general population and particularly in lower-income communities, communities of color, and Tribal communities?

(4) Hazard Mitigation Programs: Are there measures FEMA could take to prioritize funding to mitigate the

disproportionate impact climate change has on the most vulnerable in society, particularly lower-income communities, communities of color, and Tribal communities?

(5) Preparedness Grant Programs: Are there measures FEMA could take to improve our Preparedness Grant Programs to ensure the funding provided to our State and local partners and other stakeholders addresses the domestic terrorism threats currently faced, particularly when those threats impact or target groups that have been historically underserved or subjected to discrimination? What should FEMA address beyond the types of activities these grants support the priority areas on which we ask our State, local, and Tribal partners and other stakeholders to should focus; and the risk methodologies to use in determining how to allocate funding?

FEMA notes that this notice is issued solely for information and program-planning purposes. Responses to this notice do not bind FEMA to any further actions related to the response.

Robert J. Fenton,

Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

[Docket No. ICEB-2021-0003]

RIN 1653-ZA17

Employment Authorization for Venezuelan F-1 Nonimmigrant Students Experiencing Severe Economic Hardship as a Direct Result of the Current Humanitarian Crisis in Venezuela

AGENCY: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) has suspended certain regulatory requirements for F-1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Venezuela (regardless of country of birth) and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. The Secretary is taking action to provide relief to Venezuelan citizens who are lawful F-1 nonimmigrant students so the students may request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in

session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F–1 nonimmigrant student status. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the nonimmigrant student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice.

DATES: This F–1 Notice is effective April 22, 2021 and will remain in effect until September 9, 2022.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Sharon Snyder, Unit Chief, Policy and Response Unit, Student and Exchange Visitor Program; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 500 12th Street SW, Stop 5600, Washington, DC, 20536–5600; email: sevp@ice.dhs.gov, telephone: (703) 603–3400. This is not a toll-free number. Program information is available at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

What action is DHS taking under this notice?

The Secretary is exercising authority under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) to temporarily suspend the applicability of certain requirements governing on-campus and off-campus employment for F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Venezuela (regardless of country of birth), who are present in the United States in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant student status as of April 22, 2021, and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Effective with this publication, suspension of the employment limitations is available through September 9, 2022, for those who are in lawful F–1 nonimmigrant status as of April 22, 2021. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student granted employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study” for the duration of the employment authorization, if the student satisfies the minimum course load set forth in this notice.¹ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F).

¹ Because the suspension of requirements applies throughout an academic term during which the suspension is in effect, DHS considers an F–1 nonimmigrant student who engages in a reduced course load or employment (or both) after this notice is issued to be engaged in a “full course of study,” see 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6), and eligible for employment authorization, through the end of any academic term for which such student is matriculated as of September 9, 2022, provided the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement in this notice. DHS also considers students who engage in online coursework pursuant to ICE coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID–19)

Who is covered by this notice?

This notice applies exclusively to F–1 nonimmigrant students who meet all of the following conditions:

- (1) Are citizens of Venezuela, *regardless of country of birth*;
- (2) Were lawfully present in the United States in an F–1 nonimmigrant status on April 22, 2021, under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i);
- (3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified for enrollment of F–1 nonimmigrant students;
- (4) Are currently maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant status; and
- (5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

This notice applies to F–1 nonimmigrant students engaged in private kindergarten through grade 12, public school grades 9 through 12, and undergraduate and graduate education. An F–1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice who transfers to another SEVP-certified academic institution remains eligible for the relief provided by means of this notice.

Why is DHS taking this action?

As a result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, the Secretary designated Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for 18 months, effective March 9, 2021 through September 9, 2022. See 86 FR 13574. DHS now is taking action to provide relief to Venezuelan F–1 nonimmigrant students experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. These nonimmigrant students may request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school is in session, and reduce the students’ course load while continuing to maintain F–1 nonimmigrant student status.

DHS has reviewed conditions in Venezuela and determined that making employment authorization available for eligible nonimmigrant students is warranted due to conditions in Venezuela. Venezuela is facing a wide range of emergencies, including: Economic contraction; inflation and hyperinflation; deepening poverty; high levels of unemployment; reduced access to and shortages of food and medicine;

guidance for nonimmigrant students to be in compliance with regulations while such guidance remains in effect. See ICE Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on COVID–19, available at <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus> [last visited Mar. 2021].

a severely weakened medical system; the reappearance or increased incidence of certain communicable diseases; a collapse in basic services; water, electricity, and fuel shortages; political polarization; institutional and political tensions; human rights abuses and repression; crime and violence; corruption; increased human mobility and displacement (including internal migration, emigration, and return); and the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic, among other factors.²

As of February 22, 2021, approximately 7,274 F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Venezuela (regardless of country of birth) were physically present the United States and enrolled in SEVP certified academic institutions. Given the extent of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, affected nonimmigrant students whose primary means of financial support comes from Venezuela may need to be exempt from the normal student employment requirements to continue studying in the United States. The humanitarian crisis has created financial barriers for nonimmigrant students to afford to return to Venezuela for the foreseeable future. Without employment authorization, these students may lack the means to meet basic living expenses.

What is the minimum course load requirement set forth in this notice?

Undergraduate F–1 nonimmigrant students who receive on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term.³ A graduate-level F–1

² Ribando Seelke, Clare, Nelson, Rebecca M., Brown, Phillip, Margesson, Rhoda, Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations, Congressional Research Service (CRS), Summary, Aug. 26, 2020; Venezuelan Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Jan. 18, 2021; Venezuela: Complex Crisis—Overview, ACAPS, Jul. 27, 2020, <https://www.acaps.org/country/venezuela/crisis/complex-crisis> (last visited Feb. 2, 2021); Venezuela: Humanitarian Response Plan with Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), p.7–9, Jul. 2020; Detailed findings of the independent international factfinding mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, United Nations Human Rights Council, p.27, Sep. 15, 2020; Conflictividad Social 2020 [Social Conflict 2020], Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS), Jan. 25, 2021; Asmann, Parker, and Jones, Katie, InSight Crime’s 2020 Homicide Round-Up, InSight Crime, Jan. 29, 2021; Venezuela 2020 Crime & Safety Report, Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), U.S. Department of State, Jul. 21, 2020.

³ Undergraduate F–1 students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a “full course of study.” See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B).

nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice must remain registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v).

In addition, an F–1 nonimmigrant student (either undergraduate or graduate) granted on-campus or off-campus employment authorization under this notice may count up to the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter of online or distance education toward satisfying this minimum course load requirement, unless the course of study is in a language study program.⁴ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G). An F–1 nonimmigrant student attending an approved private school grades kindergarten through grade 12, or public high school grades 9 through 12 must maintain “class attendance for no less than the minimum number of hours a week prescribed by the school for normal progress toward graduation,” as required under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(E).

May an eligible F–1 nonimmigrant student who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization benefit from the suspension of regulatory requirements under this notice?

Yes. A Venezuelan F–1 nonimmigrant student who already has on-campus or off-campus employment authorization and is otherwise eligible may benefit under this notice, which suspends regulatory requirements relating to the minimum course load requirement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(A) and (B) and the employment eligibility requirements under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) as specified in this notice. Such an eligible F–1 nonimmigrant student may benefit without having to apply for a new Form I–766, Employment Authorization Document (EAD). To benefit from this notice, the F–1 nonimmigrant student must request the designated school official (DSO) enter the following statement in the remarks field of the student’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record, which the student’s Form I–20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F–1) Student Status, will reflect:

⁴ DHS also considers students who engage in online coursework pursuant to ICE coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID–19) guidance for nonimmigrant students to be in compliance with regulations while such guidance remains in effect. *See* ICE Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on COVID–19, available at <https://www.ice.gov/coronavirus> [last visited Mar. 2021].

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of [DSO must insert “on-campus” or “off-campus,” depending upon the type of employment authorization the student already has] employment authorization and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of the notice or the beginning date of the student’s employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert either the student’s program end date, the current EAD expiration date (if the student is currently authorized for off-campus employment), or the end date of this notice, whichever comes first].

Must the F–1 nonimmigrant student apply for reinstatement after expiration of this special employment authorization if the student reduces their “full course of study”?

No. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives and comports with the employment authorization permitted under this notice to be engaged in a “full course of study”⁵ for the duration of the student’s employment authorization, provided that a qualifying undergraduate level F–1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term and a qualifying graduate level F–1 nonimmigrant student remains registered for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term.⁶ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v) and (f)(6)(i)(F). DHS will not require such students to apply for reinstatement under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16) if otherwise maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant student status.

Will an F–2 dependent (spouse or minor child) of an F–1 nonimmigrant student covered by this notice be eligible to apply for employment authorization?

No. An F–2 spouse or minor child of an F–1 nonimmigrant student is not authorized to work in the United States and, therefore, may not accept employment under the F–2 nonimmigrant status. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(15)(i).

⁵ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

⁶ Undergraduate F–1 nonimmigrant students enrolled in a term of different duration must register for at least one half of the credit hours normally required under a “full course of study.” *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(B).

Will the suspension of the applicability of the standard student employment requirements apply to an individual who receives an initial F–1 Visa and makes an initial entry in the United States after publication of this notice in the Federal Register?

No. The suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements only applies to those F–1 nonimmigrant students who meet the following conditions:

- (1) Are citizens of Venezuela, regardless of country of birth;
- (2) Were lawfully present in the United States in F–1 nonimmigrant status on April 22, 2021, under section 101(a)(15)(F)(i) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(F)(i);
- (3) Are enrolled in an academic institution that is SEVP-certified for enrollment for F–1 nonimmigrant students;
- (4) Are currently maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant status; and
- (5) Are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

An F–1 nonimmigrant student who does not meet all of these requirements is ineligible for the suspension of the applicability of the standard regulatory requirements (even if experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela).

Does this notice apply to a continuing F–1 nonimmigrant student who departs the United States after publication of this notice in the Federal Register and who needs to obtain a new F–1 visa before returning to the United States to continue an educational program?

Yes. This notice applies to such a nonimmigrant student, but only if the DSO has properly notated the SEVIS record, which will then appear on the student’s Form I–20. The normal rules for visa issuance remain applicable to a nonimmigrant who needs to apply for a new F–1 visa to continue an educational program in the United States.

Does this notice apply to elementary school, middle school, and high school students in F–1 status?

Yes. However, this notice does not by itself reduce the required course load for private kindergarten through grade 12, or public high school grades 9 through 12, F–1 nonimmigrant students. Such Venezuelan students must maintain the minimum number of hours of class attendance per week prescribed by the academic institution for normal progress toward graduation. *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(E). The suspension of

certain regulatory requirements related to employment through this notice is applicable to all eligible F–1 nonimmigrant students regardless of educational level. Thus, eligible F–1 nonimmigrant students from Venezuela enrolled in an elementary school, middle school, or high school do benefit from the suspension of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session. Nothing in this notice affects the applicability of federal and state labor laws limiting the employment of minors.

On-Campus Employment Authorization

Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice be authorized to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session?

Yes. For an F–1 nonimmigrant student covered in this notice, the Secretary is suspending the applicability of the requirement in 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) that limits an F–1 student's on-campus employment to 20 hours per week while school is in session. An eligible nonimmigrant student has authorization to work more than 20 hours per week while school is in session, if the DSO has entered the following statement in the remarks field of the SEVIS student record, which will appear on the student's Form I–20:

Approved for more than 20 hours per week of on-campus employment and reduced course load, under the Special Student Relief authorization from [DSO must insert the beginning date of the notice or the beginning date of the students employment, whichever date is later] until [DSO must insert the student's program end date or the end date of the notice, whichever date comes first].

To obtain on-campus employment authorization, the F–1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate to the DSO that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship directly resulting from the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. A nonimmigrant student authorized by the DSO to engage in on-campus employment by means of this notice does not need to file with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The standard rules that permit full-time employment on-campus when school is not in session or during school vacations apply. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i).

Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain the student's F–1 nonimmigrant student status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives on-campus employment authorization under this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"⁷ for the purpose of maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the on-campus employment, if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). However, the authorization to reduce the normal course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F–1 nonimmigrant student status. Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F–1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if the reduction would not meet the school's minimum course load requirement for continued enrollment.⁸

Off-Campus Employment Authorization

What regulatory requirements does this notice temporarily suspend relating to off-campus employment?

For an F–1 student covered by this notice, as provided under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(A), the Secretary is suspending the following regulatory requirements relating to off-campus employment:

- (a) The requirement that a student must have been in F–1 nonimmigrant student status for one full academic year to be eligible for off-campus employment;
- (b) The requirement that an F–1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate that acceptance of employment will not interfere with the student's carrying a full course of study;
- (c) The requirement that limits an F–1 nonimmigrant student's employment authorization to no more than 20 hours per week of off-campus employment while school is in session; and
- (d) The requirement that the student demonstrate that employment under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(i) is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet the needs that have arisen as a result of the unforeseen circumstances.

⁷ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

⁸ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

Will an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization under this notice have authorization to reduce the normal course load and still maintain F–1 nonimmigrant status?

Yes. DHS will deem an F–1 nonimmigrant student who receives off-campus employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study"⁹ for the purpose of maintaining F–1 nonimmigrant student status for the duration of the students' employment authorization if the student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(F). However, the authorization to reduce the normal course load is solely for DHS purposes of determining valid F–1 student status. Nothing in this notice mandates that school officials allow an F–1 nonimmigrant student to take a reduced course load if such a reduced course load would not meet the school's minimum course load requirement.¹⁰

How may an eligible F–1 nonimmigrant student obtain employment authorization for off-campus employment with a reduced course load under this notice?

An F–1 nonimmigrant student must file a Form I–765, Application for Employment Authorization, with USCIS to apply for off-campus employment authorization based on the severe economic hardship directly resulting from the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Filing instructions are at <http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>.

Fee considerations. Submission of a Form I–765 currently requires payment of a \$410 fee. An applicant who is unable to pay the fee may submit a completed Form I–912, Request for Fee Waiver, along with the Form I–765 Application for Employment Authorization. See www.uscis.gov/feewaiver. The submission must include an explanation of why USCIS should grant the fee waiver and the reason(s) for the inability to pay, and any evidence to support the reason(s). See 8 CFR 103.7(c).

Supporting documentation. An F–1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship must demonstrate the following to the DSO:

- (1) This employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship; and

⁹ See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

¹⁰ Minimum course load requirement for enrollment in a school must be established in a publicly available document (e.g., catalog, website, or operating procedure), and it must be a standard applicable to all students (U.S. citizens and foreign students) enrolled at the school.

(2) The hardship is a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

If the DSO agrees that the F–1 nonimmigrant student should receive such employment authorization, the DSO must recommend application approval to USCIS by entering the following statement in the remarks field of the student’s SEVIS record, which will then appear on that student’s Form I–20:

Recommended for off-campus employment authorization in excess of 20 hours per week and reduced course load under the Special Student Relief authorization from the date of the USCIS authorization noted on Form I–766 until [DSO must insert students’ program end date or the end date of the notice, whichever date comes first]

The F–1 nonimmigrant student must then file the properly endorsed Form I–20 and Form I–765 according to the instructions for the Form I–765. The F–1 nonimmigrant student may begin working off campus only upon receipt of the EAD from USCIS.

DSO recommendation. In making a recommendation that a nonimmigrant student be approved for Special Student Relief, the DSO certifies the following:

(a) The F–1 nonimmigrant student is in good academic standing and carrying a “full course of study”¹¹ at the time of the request for employment authorization;

(b) The F–1 nonimmigrant student is a citizen of Venezuela (regardless of country of birth) and is experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, as documented on the Form I–20;

(c) The F–1 nonimmigrant student has confirmed that the student will comply with the reduced course load requirements of 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v) and register for the duration of the authorized employment for a minimum of six semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level or for a minimum of three semester or quarter hours of instruction per academic term if at the graduate level; and

(d) The off-campus employment is necessary to alleviate severe economic hardship to the individual as a direct result of the current humanitarian crisis in Venezuela.

Processing. To facilitate prompt adjudication of the student’s application for off-campus employment authorization under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(C), the F–1 nonimmigrant student should do both of the following::

(a) Ensure that the application package includes all of the following documents:

(1) A completed Form I–765;

(2) The required fee or properly documented fee waiver request as defined in 8 CFR 103.7(c);

(3) A signed and dated copy of the student’s Form I–20 with the appropriate DSO recommendation, as previously described in this notice; and

(b) Send the application in an envelope which is clearly marked on the front of the envelope, bottom right-hand side, with the phrase “SPECIAL STUDENT RELIEF.” Failure to include this notation may result in significant processing delays.

If USCIS approves the student’s Form I–765, a USCIS official will send the student an EAD as evidence of employment authorization. The EAD will contain an expiration date that does not exceed the end of the granted temporary relief.

Temporary Protected Status Considerations

Can an F–1 nonimmigrant student apply for TPS and for benefits under this notice at the same time?

Yes. An F–1 nonimmigrant student who has not yet applied for TPS or other relief that reduce the student’s course load per term and permits an increase number of work hours per week, such as the Special Student Relief,¹² under this notice has two options.

Under the first option, the nonimmigrant student may file the TPS application according to the instructions in the **Federal Register** notice designating Venezuela for TPS. *See* 86 FR 13574 (March, 9, 2021). All TPS applicants must file a Form I–821, Application for Temporary Protected Status (or submit a Request for a Fee Waiver (Form I–912)). Although not required to do so, if an F–1 nonimmigrant student wants to obtain a new EAD based on their TPS application valid through September 9, 2022, and to be eligible for EAD extensions that may be available to EADs with an A–12 or C–19 category code, they must file Form I–765 and pay the Form I–765 fee (or submit a Request for a Fee Waiver (Form I–912)). After receiving the TPS-related EAD, an F–1 nonimmigrant student may request that the student’s DSO make the required entry in SEVIS, issue an updated Form I–20 as described in this notice and notate that the nonimmigrant student

has been authorized to carry a reduced course load and is working pursuant to a TPS-related EAD. So long as the nonimmigrant student maintains the minimum course load described in this notice, does not otherwise violate the student’s nonimmigrant status, including as provided under 8 CFR 214.1(g), and maintains the student’s TPS, then the student maintains F–1 status and TPS concurrently.

Under the second option, the nonimmigrant student may apply for an EAD under Special Student Relief by filing the Form I–765 with the location specified in the filing instructions. At the same time, the F–1 nonimmigrant student may file a separate TPS application but must submit the TPS filing according to the instructions provided in the **Federal Register** notice designating Venezuela for TPS. Because the F–1 nonimmigrant student already has applied for employment authorization under Special Student Relief, they are not required to submit the Form I–765 as part of the TPS application. However, some nonimmigrant students may wish to obtain a TPS EAD in light of certain extensions that may be available to EADs with an A–12 or C–19 category code. The nonimmigrant student should check the appropriate box when filling-out Form I–821 to request a TPS-related EAD. Again, the nonimmigrant will be able to maintain compliance requirements for F–1 nonimmigrant student status and TPS.

When a student applies simultaneously for TPS and benefits under this notice, what is the minimum course load requirement while an application for employment authorization is pending?

The F–1 nonimmigrant student must maintain normal course load requirements for a “full course of study”¹³ unless or until the nonimmigrant student receives employment authorization under this notice. TPS-related employment authorization, by itself, does not authorize a nonimmigrant student to drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (e.g., clock hours for language students). Once approved for Special Student Relief employment authorization, the F–1 nonimmigrant student may drop below twelve credit hours, or otherwise applicable minimum requirements (with a minimum of six semester or quarter credit hours of instruction per academic term if at the undergraduate level, or for a minimum of three semester or quarter

¹² DHS Study in the States, Special Student Relief available at <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/special-student-relief> (last visited Mar. 2021).

¹³ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

¹¹ *See* 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6).

credit hours of instruction per academic term if at the graduate level). See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(5)(v), (f)(6), and (f)(9)(i) and (ii).

How does a student who has received a TPS-related employment authorization document then apply for authorization to take a reduced course load under this notice?

There is no further application process if a student has been approved for a TPS-related employment authorization document. The F-1 nonimmigrant student must demonstrate and provide documentation to the DSO of the direct economic hardship resulting from the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. The DSO will then verify and update the student's record in SEVIS to enable the F-1 nonimmigrant student with TPS to reduce their course load without any further action or application. No other EAD needs to be issued for the F-1 nonimmigrant student to have employment authorization.

Can a noncitizen who has been granted TPS apply for reinstatement of F-1 nonimmigrant student status after the noncitizen's F-1 nonimmigrant student status has lapsed?

Yes. Current regulations permit certain students who fall out of F-1 nonimmigrant student status to apply for reinstatement. See 8 CFR 214.2(f)(16). This provision might apply to a student who worked on a TPS-related EAD or dropped their course load before publication of this notice, and therefore fell out of student status. The student must satisfy the criteria set forth in the student status reinstatement regulations.

How long will this notice remain in effect?

This notice grants temporary relief until September 9, 2022, to eligible F-1 nonimmigrant students. DHS will continue to monitor the situation in Venezuela. Should the special provisions authorized by this notice need modification or extension, DHS will announce such changes in the **Federal Register**.

Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)

An F-1 nonimmigrant student seeking off-campus employment authorization due to severe economic hardship must demonstrate to the DSO that this employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship. A DSO who agrees that a nonimmigrant student should receive such employment authorization must recommend an application approval to USCIS by entering information in the remarks

field of the student's SEVIS record. The authority to collect this information is in the SEVIS collection of information currently approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under OMB Control Number 1653-0038.

This notice also allows an eligible F-1 nonimmigrant student to request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while the academic institution is in session, and reduce the course load while continuing to maintain F-1 nonimmigrant student status.

To apply for employment authorization, certain F-1 nonimmigrant students must complete and submit a currently approved Form I-765 according to the instructions on the form. OMB has previously approved the collection of information contained on the current Form I-765, consistent with the PRA (OMB Control No. 1615-0040). Although there will be a slight increase in the number of Form I-765 filings because of this notice, the number of filings currently contained in the OMB annual inventory for Form I-765 is sufficient to cover the additional filings. Accordingly, there is no further action required under the PRA.

Alejandro N. Mayorkas,

Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

[DHS Docket No. ICEB-2021-0002]

RIN 1653-ZA16

Employment Authorization for Syrian F-1 Nonimmigrant Students Experiencing Severe Economic Hardship as a Direct Result of Civil Unrest in Syria Since March 2011

AGENCY: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

SUMMARY: This notice announces that the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) has suspended certain regulatory requirements for F-1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria (regardless of country of birth) and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the civil unrest in Syria since March 2011. The Secretary is taking action to provide relief to Syrian citizens who are lawful F-1 nonimmigrant students so the students may request employment authorization, work an increased number of hours

while school is in session, and reduce their course load while continuing to maintain F-1 nonimmigrant student status. DHS will deem an F-1 nonimmigrant student who receives employment authorization by means of this notice to be engaged in a "full course of study" for the duration of the employment authorization, if the nonimmigrant student satisfies the minimum course load requirement described in this notice.

DATES: This F-1 Notice is effective April 22, 2021 and will remain in effect until September 30, 2022.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sharon Snyder, Unit Chief, Policy and Response Unit, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, MS 5600, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 500 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20536-5600; email: sevp@ice.dhs.gov, telephone: (703) 603-3400. This is not a toll-free number. Program information can be found at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

What action is DHS taking under this notice?

The Secretary is exercising authority under 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9) to temporarily suspend the applicability of certain requirements governing on-campus and off-campus employment for F-1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria (regardless of country of birth), who are present in the United States in lawful F-1 nonimmigrant student status as of April 22, 2021, and who are experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the civil unrest in Syria since March 2011. The original notice, which applied to F-1 nonimmigrant students who met certain criteria, including having been lawfully present in the United States in F-1 nonimmigrant status on April 3, 2012, was effective from April 3, 2012, until October 3, 2013. See 77 FR 20038 (April 3, 2012). A subsequent notice provided for an 18-month extension from October 3, 2013, through March 31, 2015. See 78 FR 36211 (June 17, 2013). A third notice provided another 18-month extension from March 31, 2015, through September 30, 2016. See 80 FR 232 (January 5, 2015). A fourth notice provided another 18-month extension from September 30, 2016, through March 31, 2018, and expanded the applicability of such suspension to Syrian F-1 nonimmigrant students who were in lawful F-1 nonimmigrant student status between April 3, 2012 and September 9, 2016. See 81 FR 62520 (September 9, 2016). A fifth notice