



Comment Submitted by Patricia Hatch

This is a Comment on the **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Notice: [Agency Information Collection Activities: Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal, Form I-589; Extension, Without Change, of a Currently Approved Collection](#)**

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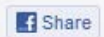
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It appears that the agency is contemplating instituting a fee for asylum applications. I would strongly recommend against this, since those for whom the asylum category was designed are, in effect, refugees seeking the humanitarian protection of the US government, and our history as a nation that provides a place of safety for those fleeing political or religious persecution - or one of the other protected grounds - would be tarnished if we now choose to charge a fee to those who have fled for their lives.

In addition, charging a fee for an application for asylum is very likely to have the unintended effect of increasing the number of frivolous applications (from those with more than adequate funds at their disposal) in proportion to deserving applications from applicants who may have fled from their country with little or no resources, may be living hand-to-mouth, and may not have even been able to afford legal representation - or may have invested the last funds they were able to bring with them to hire an attorney.

I have more than 35 years of experience working with refugees and asylees, including 16 years as Executive Director of a BIA-recognized organization, 13 years as Programs Manager for a state refugee office, and am currently in my third year as Refugee and Immigrant Ministry Director of a multi-national Christian denomination. I estimate that I have worked directly with nearly 70 asylum applicants, and indirectly with hundreds more in my past and current positions. I have encountered asylum applicants who had literally no funds and were living on the street or in homeless shelters while awaiting a decision on their applications. Many of these applicants had been tortured for their faith or their political opinion, and many had been university students, journalists, or other professionals before life-threatening circumstances forced them to flee.

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