

The Honorable Richard A. Jones
United States District Judge

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

B.H., M.A., A.S.D., M.F., H.L.,
L.M.M.M., B.M., G.K., L.K.G., and D.W.,
Individually and on Behalf of All Others
Similarly Situated,¹

No. CV11-2108-RAJ

Plaintiffs,

REVISED SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

v.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND
IMMIGRATION SERVICES;
EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR
IMMIGRATION REVIEW; Janet
NAPOLITANO, Secretary, Department of
Homeland Security; Alejandro
MAYORKAS, Director, U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration Services; Eric H.
HOLDER, Jr., Attorney General of the
United States; Juan OSUNA, Director,
Executive Office for Immigration Review,

Defendants.

This Settlement Agreement (“Agreement”) is entered into by and between Named Plaintiffs B.H., M.A., A.S.D., M.F., H.L., L.M.M.M., B.M., G.K., L.K.G., and D.W., (the “Named Plaintiffs”) and the Class (defined in Section II.A. below) (collectively, “Plaintiffs”), and Defendants U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (“USCIS”); EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR IMMIGRATION REVIEW (“EOIR”); Janet

¹ The original caption for this action listed “A.B.T., K.M.-W., G.K., L.K.G., [and] D.W.” as the individual plaintiffs. This Notice will refer to this action as “ABT,” the Settlement Agreement in this action as “the ABT Settlement Agreement,” claimants under the Agreement as “ABT claimants,” and the individual claim review process under the Agreement as the “Individual ABT Claim Review process.”

1 NAPOLITANO, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security; Alejandro MAYORKAS,
2 Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Eric H. HOLDER, Jr., Attorney
3 General of the United States; Juan OSUNA, Director, Executive Office for Immigration
4 Review (“Defendants”) (together with the Plaintiffs, the “Parties”), with reference to the
5 facts recited herein.
6

7 I. RECITALS

8

9 WHEREAS:

10 A. The Litigation.

11 1. On December 15, 2011, Plaintiffs filed a putative class action complaint,
12 challenging the Federal Government’s practices with respect to Employment
13 Authorization Documents (“EAD”) for applicants for asylum;
14

15 2. Plaintiffs are “all noncitizens in the United States who have been placed in
16 removal proceedings, have filed a complete Form I-589, *Application for Asylum and*
17 *Withholding of Removal* (“asylum application”), [and] have filed or will file a Form I-
18 765, *Application for Employment Authorization*, pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 274a.12(c)(8);
19
20

21 3. On June 5, 2012, Plaintiffs amended their complaint. Defendants timely
22 answered the amended complaint on June 19, 2012;
23

24 4. The Action remains pending before the U.S. District Court for the Western
25 District of Washington.
26

27 B. Benefits of Settlement.

28 1. The Parties recognize the need to draw to a close litigation of this Action,
29 which has been pending for roughly a year, and desire to resolve the Action – after
30 engaging in two productive mediation sessions – by entering into this Agreement, thereby
31 avoiding the time and expense of further litigation;
32
33

34 2. Plaintiffs, in consultation with their counsel, have determined that this
35 Agreement is fair, reasonable, adequate and in the best interests of Plaintiffs; and
36

37 3. Defendants deny that they have committed any act or omission giving rise
38 to any liability, deny any wrongdoing, and state that they are entering into this Agreement
39 solely to eliminate the uncertainties, burden, and expense of further protracted litigation.
40 By entering into this Agreement, Defendants do not admit any factual allegations against
41 them; do not concede any defense or objection to the Action; do not admit having
42 violated any law, whether constitutional or statutory, federal or state; and do not admit
43 having violated any regulation or administrative or judicial case law.
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2 **II. DEFINITIONS, CONDITIONS, AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**
3

4 **NOW THEREFORE** in recognition that the Parties and the interests of justice are best
5 served by concluding the litigation, subject to the Court’s approval and entry of an order
6 consistent with this Agreement, the undersigned Parties, through counsel, hereby
7 stipulate and agree as follows:
8

9 A. Definitions.

10
11 1. Action. “Action” means the lawsuit of *B.H., et al. v. United States*
12 *Citizenship and Immigration Services, et al.*, No. CV11-2108-RAJ (W.D. Wash.).
13

14 2. Application for Employment Authorization. “Application for employment
15 authorization” means the Form I-765, *Application for Employment Authorization*.
16

17 3. Asylum application. “Asylum application” means the Form I-589,
18 *Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal*.
19

20 4. Class. The definition of the “Class,” as jointly proposed by the Parties and
21 approved by the Court, is as follows:
22

23 a. Notice and Review Class: All noncitizens in the United States who
24 meet all of the following criteria: (1) have filed or will file or lodge with Defendants a
25 complete asylum application; (2) whose asylum applications have neither been approved
26 nor subjected to a denial for which no rights of review or appeal remain; (3) whose
27 applications for employment authorization have been or will be denied; (4) whose
28 eligibility for employment authorization based on a pending asylum application will be
29 determined in a manner that is alleged to provide insufficient notice and/or opportunity
30 for review; and (5) who fall in one or more of the following Subclasses:
31

32 i. Hearing Subclass: Individuals who meet all of the
33 following criteria: (1) who have been or will be issued a Form I-862, *Notice to Appear* in
34 removal proceedings, or Form I-863, *Notice of Referral* to an immigration judge; (2) who
35 have filed or lodged, or sought to lodge, or who will lodge or seek to lodge a complete
36 defensive asylum application with the immigration court prior to a hearing before an
37 immigration judge; and (3) whose eligibility for employment authorization has been or
38 will be calculated from the date the asylum application was or will be filed at a hearing
39 before an immigration judge.
40

41 ii. Prolonged Tolling Subclass: Asylum applicants who meet
42 all of the following criteria: (1) non-detained asylum applicants whose time creditable
43 toward employment authorization is or will be stopped due to delay attributed to them by
44 Defendants; (2) who have allegedly resolved the issue causing the delay or will allegedly
45 resolve the issue causing the delay prior to the next scheduled hearing before an
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1 immigration judge; (3) but whose time creditable toward employment authorization
2 remains or will remain stopped until the next hearing date.

3
4 iii. Missed Asylum Interview Subclass: Asylum applicants
5 who meet both of the following criteria: (1) who have failed or will fail to appear for an
6 asylum interview with USCIS; and (2) who have not or will not accrue time creditable
7 toward eligibility for employment authorization following the date of the missed asylum
8 interview on account of missing that asylum interview.

9
10 iv. Remand Subclass: Asylum applicants who meet both of the
11 following criteria: (1) whose asylum applications were or will be denied by the
12 immigration court before they have been pending at least 180 days exclusive of applicant
13 caused delays; and (2) who subsequent to an appeal in which either the Board of
14 Immigration Appeals (BIA) or a federal court of appeals remands their case for further
15 adjudication of their asylum claim by an immigration judge, have not or will not accrue
16 additional time creditable toward eligibility for employment authorization.

17
18 5. Class counsel. “Class counsel” means counsel appointed to represent the
19 Class in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(g), as follows:

20
21 Matt Adams
22 Christopher Strawn
23 NORTHWEST IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT (NWIRP)
24 615 2nd Avenue, Suite 400
25 Seattle, WA 98104

26
27 Melissa Crow
28 Mary Kenney
29 Emily Creighton
30 AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (AIC)
31 1331 G Street NW, Suite 200
32 Washington, DC 20005

33
34 Robert H. Gibbs
35 Robert Pauw
36 GIBBS HOUSTON PAUW
37 1000 Second Avenue, Suite 1600
38 Seattle, WA 98104

39
40 Iris Gomez
41 MASSACHUSETTS LAW REFORM INSTITUTE (MLRI)
42 99 Chauncy Street, Suite 500
43 Boston, MA 02111

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6. Class member. “Class member” means a member of the Class.

7. Court. “Court” means the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington.

8. EAD. “EAD” means Employment Authorization Document.

9. Fairness Hearing. “Fairness Hearing” means the hearing required for Final Approval of the settlement pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(e)(2) and described at Section II.B.5. of this Agreement.

10. Individual ABT Claim Review. “Individual ABT Claim Review” refers to the exclusive process used by individual ABT claimants who allege to be Class or Subclass members and allege that USCIS and/or EOIR has failed to comply with terms of this Agreement, as described in Section II.C.11.b.

11. Parties. “Party” or “parties” means the Defendants and the Plaintiffs, including all Class members.

12. Preliminary Approval. “Preliminary Approval” means that the Court has granted the Parties’ Joint Motion for Preliminary Approval of Settlement as described in Section II.B.2. of this Agreement and ordered a Fairness Hearing.

B. Conditions and Approval of Settlement.

1. Effective Date of Agreement. After this Agreement has been executed by all Parties, it will become effective upon Preliminary Approval of the settlement by the Court.

2. Submission of the Settlement Agreement to Court for Preliminary Approval. Within fifteen (15) days after execution of this Agreement, the Parties shall apply to the Court for Preliminary Approval of the settlement. The Parties shall file a Joint Motion for Preliminary Approval and Request for a Fairness Hearing, and they shall attach a copy of this Agreement, the proposed Notice to the Class, in the form of Exhibit A attached hereto, and such other documents that the Parties determine are necessary for the Court’s consideration. The Parties further agree to file by that same time a joint motion to stay proceedings pending the Court’s consideration of the matter.

3. Effect of the Court’s Denial of the Agreement. If the Court rejects this Agreement, in whole or in part, or otherwise finds that the Agreement is not fair, reasonable, and adequate, this Agreement shall become null and void.

4. Attorney’s Fees and Costs. The Parties have resolved the matter of fees arising from this litigation as follows: Within ninety (90) days of the Court’s Final Approval of the Agreement, as described in Section II.B.7., Defendants will deliver to Plaintiffs’ Counsel the sum of \$425,000, in settlement of all claims for attorneys’ fees

1 and costs that could have been or will be claimed in this litigation to date. Plaintiffs and
2 Class members do not waive any claims to attorney's fees and costs should future
3 litigation pursuant to the Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Section II.C.11. be necessary.
4

5 5. Fairness Hearing. At the Fairness Hearing, the Parties will jointly request
6 that the Court approve the settlement as final, fair, reasonable, adequate and binding on
7 the Class, all Class Members, and all Plaintiffs.
8

9 6. Objections to Settlement. Within seven days following the Court's
10 Preliminary Approval of the Agreement, Defendants will post the Notice to the Class,
11 attached as Exhibit A to this Agreement, on USCIS' website and on EOIR's website, post
12 in all immigration courts, distribute to the EOIR pro bono list, and distribute to
13 community-based organizations and other interested parties. Specifically, EOIR will post
14 the notice on a bulletin board in the waiting room for each immigration court where there
15 is such a bulletin board. This is where all notices to the public are typically posted, and
16 aliens and their counsel should know to look for important notices there. In immigration
17 courts that lack bulletin boards, EOIR will post the notice in the equivalent location
18 where respondents and their counsel should know to look for notices. Additionally, to
19 accommodate detained class members, EOIR will post the notice in a visible place in
20 EOIR's space within each facility that is accessible to aliens and where aliens should
21 know to look for important notices, where such a space is available. Each immigration
22 court has a Court Administrator that can ensure that the notices will be available within
23 the seven-day deadline. Plaintiffs will distribute the Notice to the Class, attached as
24 Exhibit A to this Agreement, to all American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
25 chapters, and post on AILA InfoNet and on Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
26 (NWIRP), American Immigration Council (AIC) and Massachusetts Law Reform
27 Institute (MLRI) websites. Within thirty (30) days of issuance of the Notice to the Class,
28 in the above-described manner, any Plaintiff who wishes to object to the fairness,
29 reasonableness or adequacy of this Agreement or the settlement contemplated herein
30 must file with the Clerk of Court and serve on the Parties a statement of objection setting
31 forth the specific reason(s), if any, for the objection, including any legal support or
32 evidence in support of the objection, grounds to support his or her status as a Plaintiff,
33 and whether the Plaintiff intends to appear at the Fairness Hearing. The Parties will have
34 thirty (30) days following the objection period in which to submit answers to any
35 objections that are filed. The notice to the Clerk of the Court shall be sent to: Clerk, U.S.
36 District Court for the Western District of Washington, 700 Stewart Street Seattle, WA
37 98101, and both the envelope and letter shall state "Attention: *A.B.T., et al. v. United*
38 *States Citizenship and Immigration Services*, No. CV11-2108-RAJ (W.D. Wash.)."
39 Copies shall also be served on counsel for Plaintiffs and counsel for Defendants as set
40 forth in the Notice to Class, Exhibit A.
41

42 7. Final Approval.
43

44 a. The Court's Final Approval of the settlement set forth in this
45 Agreement shall consist of its orders granting each of the Parties' requests made in
46 connection with the Fairness Hearing, as described in Section II.B.5. of this Agreement,
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1 resolving all claims before the Court, and dismissing the Action with prejudice, with the
2 exception that following Final Approval of this Agreement, the Court shall retain
3 jurisdiction over only the following matters:

4
5 i. claims by any party in accordance with the provisions laid out
6 in Section II.C.11. hereto that any other party has committed a violation of this
7 Agreement;

8
9 ii. the express repudiation of any of the terms of this Agreement
10 by any party; and

11
12 iii. any applications for attorney fees and costs relating to Court
13 enforcement of this Agreement under the dispute resolution provisions in Section
14 II.C.11.a.iv. and II.C.11.b.vi. of this Agreement.
15

16
17 C. Miscellaneous Provisions.

18
19 1. Entire Agreement. This Agreement, including the Exhibit(s) and the
20 notices, interim notices and other information described under the Terms of Agreement at
21 Section III.A., constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties with respect to the
22 Action and claims released or discharged by the Agreement, and supersedes all prior
23 discussions, agreements and understandings, both written and oral, among the Parties in
24 connection therewith.

25
26 2. No modification. No change or modification of this Agreement shall be
27 valid unless it is contained in writing and signed by or on behalf of Plaintiffs and
28 Defendants and approved by the Court.

29
30 3. Full and Final Settlement. The Parties intend that the execution and
31 performance of this Agreement shall, as provided above, be effective as a full and final
32 settlement of and shall fully dispose of all claims and issues that Plaintiffs raise against
33 Defendants in the Action. The Parties acknowledge that this Agreement is fully binding
34 upon them during the life of the Agreement.

35
36 4. Severability. If any provision of this Agreement is declared null, void,
37 invalid, illegal, or unenforceable in any respect, the remaining provisions shall remain in
38 full force and effect.

39
40 5. Notices. All notices required or permitted under or pertaining to this
41 Agreement shall be in writing and delivered by any method providing proof of delivery.
42 Any notice shall be deemed to have been completed upon mailing. Notices shall be
43 delivered to the Parties at the following addresses until a different address has been
44 designated by notice to the other Party:

45
46 TO PLAINTIFFS:
47

1
2 Matt Adams
3 NORTHWEST IMMIGRANT RIGHTS PROJECT
4 615 2nd Avenue, Suite 400
5 Seattle, WA 98104
6

7 TO DEFENDANTS:
8

9 J. Max Weintraub
10 Senior Litigation Counsel
11 United States Department of Justice
12 Civil Division
13 Office of Immigration Litigation – District Court Section
14 P.O. Box 868, Ben Franklin Station
15 Washington, D.C. 20044
16

17 6. Opportunity to Review. The Parties acknowledge and agree that they have
18 reviewed this Agreement with legal counsel and agree to the particular language of the
19 provisions it contains. In the event of an ambiguity in or dispute regarding the
20 interpretation of the Agreement, interpretation of the Agreement shall not be resolved by
21 any rule providing for interpretation against the drafter. The Parties expressly agree that
22 in the event of an ambiguity or dispute regarding the interpretation of this Agreement, the
23 Agreement will be interpreted as if each Party hereto participated in the drafting hereof.
24

25 7. Construction of Agreement. This Agreement involves compromises of the
26 Parties' previously stated legal positions in connection with the Action. Accordingly, this
27 Agreement does not reflect upon the Parties' views as to rights and obligations with
28 respect to matters or persons outside of the scope of this Agreement.
29

30 8. Execution of Other Documents. Each party agrees to execute and deliver
31 such other documents and instruments and to take further action as may be reasonably
32 necessary to fully carry out the intent and purposes of this Agreement.
33

34 9. No Precedential Value. This Agreement, whether or not executed, and any
35 proceedings taken pursuant to it:
36

37 a. Shall not be offered or received against any party as evidence of,
38 or construed as or deemed to be evidence of, any presumption, concession, or admission
39 by any of the Parties of the truth in any fact of the validity of any claim that had been or
40 could have been asserted in the action, or any liability, negligence, fault, or wrongdoing
41 of the Defendants; or any admission by the Defendants of any violations of, or failure to
42 comply with, the Constitution, laws or regulations; and
43

44 b. Shall not be offered or received against the Defendants as evidence
45 of a presumption, concession, or admission of any liability, negligence, fault,
46 wrongdoing, or in any other way referred to for any other reason as against the Parties to
47

1 this Agreement, in any other civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceedings, other
2 than in proceedings to enforce this Agreement; provided, however, that if this Agreement
3 is approved by the Court, Defendants may refer to it and rely upon it to effectuate the
4 liability protection granted them hereunder.
5

6 10. Headings. The Parties agree the captions or underlined paragraph headings
7 in this Agreement are included in the Agreement solely for the convenience of the
8 Parties, are not part of the terms and conditions of the Agreement, and do not limit, alter,
9 or otherwise affect the provisions of, and the Parties' rights and obligations under, this
10 Agreement.
11

12 11. Dispute Resolution Mechanism. With regard to claims raised in the Action
13 and resolved by this Agreement, the dispute resolution provisions described below shall
14 provide the sole means to challenge performance of obligations arising under this
15 Agreement. Claims alleging that a Party has failed to comply with the terms of this
16 Agreement with respect to the entire Class or an entire Subclass, or multiple members of
17 the Class or a Subclass must be brought pursuant to subparagraph (a) and as further
18 provided by subparagraphs (c) – (f) below. Claims alleging that Defendants have failed to
19 comply with the terms of this Agreement with respect to individual asylum applicants
20 alleging to be Class members (individual ABT claimants) must be brought pursuant to
21 the “Individual ABT Claim Review” process, described in subparagraph (b) and as
22 further provided by subparagraphs (c) - (f) below. This Agreement shall not affect or in
23 any way limit the ability of parties, individuals, groups, or classes to challenge or obtain
24 review of claims not resolved by or arising under this Agreement (including those claims
25 listed in subparagraph (b)(ii) below) through any existing right or authority under law,
26 regulations, or applicable procedures.
27

28 a. Dispute Resolution Terms for multiple Class or Subclass members.
29

30 i. For allegations that a party has failed to comply with the
31 terms of this Agreement with respect to the entire Class or an entire Subclass, or multiple
32 members of the Class or a Subclass, the complaining party (“complaining party”) shall
33 notify the other party (“responding party”) in writing of the specific ground(s) upon
34 which they base their claim of non-compliance with this Agreement, substantiated with
35 specific, detailed, and timely information about the alleged non-compliance sufficient to
36 enable the responding party to investigate and respond.
37

38 ii. Within forty-five (45) days after the responding party
39 receives notice of the allegation of non-compliance with this Agreement from the
40 complaining party in accordance with subparagraph (a)(i) above, the responding party
41 shall notify the complaining party in writing of the results of the responding party's
42 investigation of facts and any action that it has taken or intends to take in connection with
43 allegation of non-compliance.
44

45 iii. Should any dispute remain after a party has undertaken the
46 dispute resolution mechanism set forth in subparagraphs (a)(i) – (ii) above, the parties
47

1 shall negotiate in good faith to resolve any such remaining disputes within thirty (30)
2 days from the date the responding party sends notification of the results of its
3 investigation under subparagraph (a)(ii) above.
4

5 iv. Should the parties be unable to resolve any dispute, and
6 following implementation of the provisions of subparagraphs (a)(i) – (iii) above, the
7 complaining party may apply to the Court for enforcement of this Agreement. The
8 complaining party shall notify the responding party of its intent to do so before applying
9 to the Court for enforcement of the Agreement. Any actions brought to the Court under
10 subparagraph (a) must be brought by either Defendants USCIS or EOIR or by Class
11 counsel appointed to represent Plaintiffs in accordance with Section II.A.5. of this
12 Agreement.
13

14 b. Individual ABT Claim Review.
15

16 i. The Individual ABT Claim Review process shall be the
17 exclusive process used by individual ABT claimants who allege that they are Class or
18 Subclass members and that USCIS and/or EOIR has failed to comply with the terms of
19 this Agreement. Nothing in this subparagraph limits an individual ABT claimant’s ability
20 to join a multi-member Class or Subclass challenge under subparagraph (a) above. An
21 individual ABT claimant may only utilize the Individual ABT Claim Review process to
22 challenge compliance with this Agreement. Specifically, individual ABT claimants may
23 only raise the following claims under this review process:
24

- 25 (I) An individual ABT claimant was not provided with
26 the notice referenced in Section I.A.1. of this
27 Agreement (“notice”) when he/she lodged or filed
28 his/her asylum application with the immigration
29 court, or when USCIS referred his/her case to the
30 immigration court.
- 31 (II) EOIR did not make the notice available at
32 subsequent hearings before the immigration court.
33
- 34 (III) EOIR did not stamp the individual ABT claimant’s
35 complete defensive asylum application at the
36 immigration court clerk’s window, mark as “lodged
37 not filed,” and return it to the claimant, or prevented
38 or otherwise deterred the ABT claimant from
39 lodging a complete asylum application.
40
- 41 (IV) In adjudicating an application for employment
42 authorization, USCIS did not use the date on which
43 an individual ABT claimant “lodged” his or her
44 asylum application at an immigration court clerk’s
45
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1 window as the filing date for the purposes of EAD
2 eligibility.

3
4 (V) USCIS did not mail a Failure to Appear Warning
5 Letter to the individual ABT claimant after the
6 claimant failed to appear for an asylum interview
7 with a USCIS Asylum Office.

8
9 (VI) Where an individual ABT claimant failed to appear
10 at a scheduled asylum interview with a USCIS
11 Asylum Office, and the claimant did not attempt to
12 reschedule his or her asylum interview with a
13 USCIS Asylum Office, USCIS did not wait forty-
14 five (45) days prior to issuance of a decision
15 referring the asylum application to an immigration
16 judge.

17
18 (VII) USCIS did not include a Referral Notice for Failure
19 to Appear when referring an individual ABT
20 claimant's asylum application to an immigration
21 judge after the claimant missed an asylum interview
22 and did not reschedule that interview within forty-
23 five (45) days.

24
25 (VIII) After an ABT claimant requested a determination
26 on exceptional circumstances referenced in Section
27 I.A.4. of this Agreement, USCIS did not provide the
28 individual ABT claimant and/or his or her
29 representative of record with a determination letter,
30 with notification of the determination to U.S.
31 Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of
32 the Principal Legal Advisor ("ICE OPLA").

33
34 (IX) After the Asylum Office reopened jurisdiction over
35 an individual ABT claimant's asylum case, where
36 the claimant had missed an asylum interview but
37 later established exceptional circumstances with a
38 USCIS Asylum Office and where an immigration
39 judge dismissed proceedings, USCIS did not restart
40 the time period for asylum adjudication and EAD
41 eligibility on the date that the ABT claimant
42 appeared for a rescheduled interview.

43
44 (X) In adjudicating an application for employment
45 authorization, USCIS did not credit the applicant
46 with the number of days that elapsed between the
47

1 immigration judge's initial denial of the individual
2 ABT claimant's asylum claim and the date of the
3 BIA's remand order for the purposes of EAD
4 eligibility.
5

6 ii. The following non-exhaustive list of claims cannot be
7 challenged through the Individual ABT Claim Review process; however, this Agreement
8 shall not affect or in any way limit the ability of parties, individuals, groups, or classes to
9 challenge or obtain review of claims not resolved by this Agreement through any existing
10 right or authority under law, regulations, or applicable procedures.
11

12 (I) A challenge to whether an immigration judge made
13 the reason(s) for the case adjournment clear on the
14 record.
15

16 (II) A challenge to whether the immigration judge
17 offered a non-detained individual ABT claimant an
18 expedited hearing date that was a minimum of
19 forty-five (45) days from the last master calendar
20 hearing.
21

22 iii. Individual asylum applicants alleging to be Class or
23 Subclass members who believe that USCIS and/or EOIR have failed to comply with the
24 terms of this Agreement as required under Section III.A. (*i.e.*, individual ABT claimants)
25 must complete and submit to USCIS and/or EOIR, as appropriate, an ABT Claim Form
26 (attached to this Agreement as Exhibit B), detailing the basis for the alleged violation of
27 the Agreement, together with copies of any documents, applications, receipts, notices,
28 and/or letters in their possession that are requested in the ABT Claim Form or that the
29 individual ABT claimants believe support their claim(s). Included in the ABT Claim
30 Form, the individual ABT claimant must designate which ground he/she is claiming the
31 Defendant(s) is/are noncompliant with in this Agreement (as enumerated in subparagraph
32 (b)(i) above).
33

34 iv. Within forty-five (45) days after USCIS and/or EOIR's
35 receipt of an ABT Claim Form in accordance with subparagraph (b)(iii) above, USCIS
36 and/or EOIR will mail the claimant and/or his or her representative or record, if any,
37 either a written Final Notice or a Notice of Preliminary Findings, as described in clause
38 (I) and/or (II) below:
39

40 (I) The Final Notice will include the results of USCIS's
41 and/or EOIR's investigation of the facts as follows: (1) a
42 determination of whether or not the claimant is a Class or
43 Subclass member; (2) if the individual claimant is found to
44 be a Class or Subclass member, a determination of whether
45 a violation of the Agreement occurred with respect to the
46 individual ABT claimant; (3) a description of any
47

1 corrective action that it has taken or intends to take to
2 remedy the violation (if any); and (4) in the event USCIS
3 and/or EOIR determines that the individual ABT claimant
4 is not a member of a Class or Subclass, or has not stated a
5 claim cognizable under the Agreement, instructions
6 regarding seeking review of that determination or any
7 corrective action, as further described in subparagraph (vi)
8 below.

9
10 (II) The Notice of Preliminary Findings will explain the
11 basis for USCIS and/or EOIR's belief that the claimant is
12 not a Class or Subclass member, or that there was no
13 violation of the Agreement, and request additional
14 information and/or evidence from the individual ABT
15 claimant. If USCIS and/or EOIR send a Notice of
16 Preliminary Findings, the applicant will have thirty (30)
17 days (the "supplementation period") to submit additional
18 written evidence or information to remedy the perceived
19 deficiency. After the supplementation period has elapsed
20 with no response from the individual ABT claimant, or
21 within thirty days following timely receipt of any
22 supplemental documents or information from the claimant,
23 USCIS and/or EOIR will send a Final Notice, as described
24 in clause (I) above, to the claimant and/or his or her counsel
25 of record.

26
27 v. Should any dispute remain after an individual ABT
28 claimant has undertaken the dispute resolution mechanism in subparagraph (b) above, the
29 parties may negotiate in good faith to resolve any such remaining disputes within thirty
30 (30) days from when USCIS and/or EOIR mailed the Final Notice under subparagraph
31 (b)(iv) above. By way of example and not limitation, if a claim is granted, but the
32 complaining party believes that the corrective action described in the Final Notice
33 granting the claim is insufficient to correct error, he or she may attempt to negotiate a
34 resolution of that dispute.

35
36 vi. Should the parties be unable to resolve a dispute, and
37 following implementation of the provisions of subparagraphs (b)(i) – (v) above,
38 individual ABT claimants may apply to the Court for enforcement of this
39 Agreement. The parties agree that individual ABT claimants shall not apply to the Court
40 for enforcement of the Agreement until applicable procedures detailed in subparagraph
41 (b) above have been exhausted, and subject to the further terms and limitation provided in
42 this Section II.C.11. The individual ABT claimants shall notify the Defendants of their
43 intent to do so before applying to the Court for the enforcement of the Agreement.

44
45 c. All claims arising under this Agreement, pursuant to subparagraph
46 (a) above must be raised by Class counsel as soon as possible, but no later than 180 days
47

1 after discovery of the claim; or in the case of individual ABT claimants seeking to
2 implement the Individual ABT Claim Review process pursuant to subparagraph (b)
3 above, as soon as possible, but by no later than 180 days following the denial of an
4 application for employment authorization, based on an alleged violation of the terms
5 provided under this Agreement.

6
7 d. The Parties agree that the provisions in Section II.C.11. will not be
8 used to resolve any disputes regarding timeliness of the reports listed in Section II.C.13.
9 of the Agreement. The Parties agree that failure to comply with the time periods or
10 deadlines described in Section II.C.11. shall not constitute separate violations of this
11 Agreement; however, if a responding party fails to respond to a claim presented in
12 Section II.C.11. within the prescribed time period or by the required deadline, the
13 complaining party may proceed to seek further review of the claim from the Court, or as
14 otherwise provided in this Agreement.

15
16 e. Defendants agree to use reasonable and good faith efforts to
17 implement the procedures described in this Agreement in a manner that avoids
18 unnecessary interruption of asylum seekers' employment authorization where eligible,
19 and that facilitates eligible asylum applicants' ability to provide documentation in
20 accordance with the requirements of 8 U.S.C. § 1324a(b) and 8 C.F.R. § 274a.2.

21
22 f. The Parties agree that these dispute resolution terms in Section
23 II.C.11. of this Agreement will terminate 180 days after the Termination Date of the
24 Agreement under Section II.C.14. of this Agreement and, subject to the limitations
25 described in subparagraph (c) above, all pending claims have been resolved under this
26 paragraph.

27
28 12. Applicable Law. This Agreement and its terms shall be construed in
29 accordance with the law of the United States of America and the United States Court of
30 Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

31
32 13. Periodic Reporting of Defendants. Because full implementation of each of
33 the terms of this Agreement will take time (with settlement terms referenced in Sections
34 III.A.1. and III.A.2., below, taking up to twenty-four (24) months from the Effective Date
35 of this Agreement), Defendants agree to submit reports every six (6) months to Plaintiffs
36 and file them with the Court detailing the progress made towards implementation of the
37 settlement terms. When Defendants determine that a settlement term is fully
38 implemented, they shall submit a report explaining the reasons for this conclusion to
39 Plaintiffs and file it with the Court.

40
41 14. Termination Date. This Agreement and all of its terms, and all rights
42 acquired hereunder, shall end either four (4) years following the full implementation of
43 all the terms of Agreement, as documented by Defendants' reports to Plaintiffs and the
44 Court with respect to each settlement term (described in Section II.C.13., above) of this
45 Agreement, or upon the following date: the Effective Date of this Agreement plus six (6)
46 years, whichever shall first occur.

1
2 15. Nothing in this Agreement shall prevent Defendants EOIR and/or USCIS
3 from amending their regulations, manuals, policies, procedures, and/or practices as
4 necessary or for purposes of complying with applicable statutory changes and/or
5 precedential decisions, provided that Defendants continue to comply with all of their
6 obligations under the terms of this Agreement. Should either Defendant determine that a
7 change in law, whether statutory or by precedent decision, necessitates a change in their
8 regulations, manuals, policies, procedures, and/or practices that would conflict with one
9 or more of its obligations under the Agreement, the Parties shall attempt to reach an
10 agreement with respect to the Defendant's continuing obligations under the Agreement
11 and/or any amendments to this Agreement, pursuant to procedures outlined in Section
12 II.11.a. of this Agreement. Should the Parties fail to agree, the question of how the
13 Defendant's continuing obligations under the Agreement are affected by the change in
14 the law will be submitted to the Court pursuant to Section II.11.a.iv. of this Agreement.
15

16 III. TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT

17
18 A. By this Agreement, Defendants have agreed to modify certain of their processes,
19 policies, procedures, and practices. The terms of this Agreement shall apply to members
20 of the Class commencing from the date upon which each of the changes, including
21 interim changes, described herein are implemented, as further described below.
22

23 1. Notice & Review Claim.

24
25 a. Defendant EOIR will amend the November 15, 2011, Operating
26 Policies and Procedures Memorandum 11-02: The Asylum Clock from Chief
27 Immigration Judge Brian O'Leary, to state that an immigration judge must make the
28 reason(s) for the case adjournment clear on the record. Furthermore, Defendants will
29 provide general information, jointly produced by Defendants EOIR and USCIS, who
30 shall work in good faith with Plaintiffs' counsel, regarding employment authorization for
31 individuals with pending asylum applications, including where to obtain case-specific
32 information, the impact of hearing adjournment codes on EAD eligibility, and where to
33 direct inquiries relating to requests to correct hearing adjournment codes and inquiries
34 relating to EAD eligibility. Defendant EOIR will provide the notice to an asylum
35 applicant when an asylum application is lodged or filed with an immigration court. In
36 addition, EOIR will make a copy of the notice available at each hearing. USCIS will
37 make the information publicly available, including providing the notice to an asylum
38 applicant upon referral. While the content of the EAD denial letter cannot be determined
39 at this time, USCIS agrees to consider in good faith input from Plaintiffs' counsel as to
40 the language and content of the EAD denial letter.
41

42 b. Defendants will amend the November 15, 2011, Operating Policies
43 and Procedures Memorandum 11-02: The Asylum Clock from Chief Immigration Judge
44 Brian O'Leary, within six (6) months of the Effective Date of this Agreement. With
45 regard to the remaining resolutions described in subparagraph (a) above, Defendants will
46
47

1 implement these resolutions as soon as possible, but no later than twenty-four (24)
2 months from the Effective Date of this Agreement.

3
4 c. In the interim, Defendants will implement the following
5 procedures to provide relief to affected Class members: Defendants will work with
6 Plaintiffs' counsel to create an interim notice regarding employment authorization for
7 individuals with pending asylum applications within six (6) months of the Effective Date
8 of this Agreement. Defendants will also provide contact information for inquiries
9 regarding requests to correct the calculation of the asylum adjudications period before the
10 Asylum Office, hearing adjournment codes before the immigration court, and asylum-
11 related EAD denials.

12
13 d. Class members who have appeared or who will appear before
14 EOIR or USCIS prior to the Defendants' implementation of these settlement terms shall
15 not have a cause of action against the Defendants arising from the fact that they were not
16 previously afforded the relief described herein as pertains to the Notice and Review
17 Claim.

18
19 e. The interim and final relief described in this Agreement in Section
20 III.A.1. shall apply prospectively to Notice and Review Class members at the time that
21 these settlement terms are implemented.

22
23 2. Hearing Claim.

24
25 a. Defendant EOIR will accept complete defensive asylum
26 applications at the immigration court clerk's window as "lodged not filed." EOIR will
27 transmit the "lodged not filed" date to USCIS. The applicant will submit a Form I-765,
28 *Application for Employment Authorization*, to USCIS, along with a copy of the asylum
29 application that the EOIR immigration court clerk stamped "lodged not filed." An asylum
30 applicant may only lodge a complete asylum application once. If an asylum application is
31 lodged, it must be lodged before that application is filed with an immigration judge. The
32 requirement that an asylum application be filed before an immigration judge will not
33 change. Defendant EOIR considers the asylum application "filed" on the date an
34 immigration judge accepts the application at a hearing. Defendant USCIS will consider
35 the date on which the asylum application was "lodged not filed" at the EOIR clerk's
36 window as an application filing date for the purpose of calculating the time period for
37 EAD eligibility. Defendants will implement these resolutions as soon as possible but no
38 later than twenty-four (24) months from the Effective Date of this Agreement.

39
40 b. In the interim, Defendants will implement the following
41 procedures to provide relief to affected Class members: If an asylum application is
42 submitted to an immigration court outside of a hearing before an immigration judge, the
43 asylum application will be stamped "lodged not filed" by a clerk at the EOIR court at
44 which the application is lodged. When filing a Form I-765, *Application for Employment*
45 *Authorization*, with USCIS, the applicant will submit a copy of the asylum application
46 that an EOIR immigration clerk stamped "lodged not filed." In adjudicating the
47

1 application for employment authorization, USCIS will consider the date on which the
2 application was stamped “lodged not filed” as the application filing date for the purpose
3 of calculating the time period for EAD eligibility. Defendants will implement these
4 resolutions within six (6) months of the Effective Date of this Agreement.
5

6 c. Hearing Subclass members who are or will be in immigration
7 proceedings before EOIR prior to the Defendants’ implementation of these settlement
8 terms shall not have a cause of action against the Defendants arising from the fact that
9 they were not previously afforded the relief described herein as pertains to the Hearing
10 Claim.
11

12 d. The interim and final relief described in this Agreement at Section
13 III.A.2. shall apply prospectively to Hearing Subclass members whose asylum
14 applications have not previously been deemed filed by an immigration judge at a hearing
15 at the time that these settlement terms are implemented.
16

17 3. Prolonged Tolling Claim.
18

19 a. Defendant EOIR will amend the November 15, 2011, Operating
20 Policies and Procedures Memorandum 11-02: The Asylum Clock from Chief
21 Immigration Judge Brian O’Leary, to change section VI.E.2.c. (“Proceedings Before the
22 Immigration Court: Offering Future Hearing Dates: Expedited Cases: Offering an
23 ‘Expedited Asylum Hearing Date’”) from “minimum of 14 days should be allowed” to
24 “minimum of 45 days must be allowed.” Defendant EOIR will add an exception for
25 detained cases, in which the “minimum of 14 days” time period will remain. Defendants
26 will implement these resolutions within six (6) months of the Effective Date of this
27 Agreement.
28

29 b. Prolonged Tolling Subclass members who have appeared or who
30 will appear before EOIR prior to the Defendants’ implementation of these settlement
31 terms shall not have a cause of action against the Defendants arising from the fact that
32 they were not previously afforded the relief described herein as pertains to the Prolonged
33 Tolling Claim.
34

35 c. The interim and final relief described in this Agreement in Section
36 III.A.3. shall apply to prolonged tolling Subclass members in immigration proceedings
37 who have not had their merits hearing calendared for the first time before EOIR at the
38 time these settlement terms are implemented, and shall apply prospectively.
39

40 4. Missed Asylum Interview Claim.
41

42 a. Defendant USCIS will mail a “Failure to Appear” Warning Letter
43 as soon as possible after an asylum applicant misses an interview. The letter will describe
44 the effect of the failure to appear on EAD eligibility and list procedural steps the
45 applicant must take to establish “good cause” for failing to appear for the interview. It
46
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1 will also describe the effect of failing to respond to the warning letter within a forty-five
2 (45) day period.

3
4 b. Defendant USCIS will extend the period prior to issuance of a
5 decision (including a referral letter) from fifteen (15) to forty-five (45) calendar days,
6 during which time submission of an excuse for missing an interview will be treated as a
7 request to reschedule under the Asylum Division's Affirmative Asylum Procedures
8 Manual and the "good cause" standard will apply.

9
10 c. Defendant USCIS will include a new "Referral Notice for Failure
11 to Appear" with charging documents mailed to the applicant. This notice will describe the
12 effect of the failure to appear on EAD eligibility and list procedural steps the applicant
13 must take to establish "exceptional circumstances" with an Asylum Office.

14
15 d. Defendants will provide Plaintiffs' counsel with drafts of the
16 "Failure to Appear" Warning Letter and the "Referral Notice for Failure to Appear" and
17 will consider their input in good faith before finalizing these documents.

18
19 e. Defendant USCIS will revise the process of establishing
20 exceptional circumstances with an Asylum Office as follows. Upon determining whether
21 exceptional circumstances exist, the Asylum Office will issue a determination letter to the
22 applicant and/or his or her representative of record, and notify ICE OPLA of the
23 determination. If the Asylum Office determines that exceptional circumstances exist, the
24 applicant may then request that ICE OPLA file a joint motion for dismissal of
25 immigration proceedings. If the proceedings are dismissed, and the asylum application is
26 returned to the Asylum Office, the Asylum Office will reopen the asylum application and
27 take jurisdiction over the applicant's case.

28
29 f. Defendant USCIS will restart the 180-day time period for
30 determining asylum adjudication and EAD eligibility following the resolution of the
31 missed interview based on exceptional circumstances. If the applicant establishes
32 exceptional circumstances, and the application is returned to the Asylum Division, the
33 time period for determining asylum adjudication and EAD eligibility, which stopped on
34 the date of the failure to appear, would restart on the date the applicant appears for the
35 rescheduled interview at an Asylum Office.

36
37 g. Defendants will implement these resolutions in subparagraph (a) –
38 (f) within six (6) months of the Effective Date of this Agreement.

39
40 h. Missed Asylum Interview Subclass members who have appeared
41 or who will appear before USCIS prior to the Defendants' implementation of the
42 settlement terms shall not have a cause of action against the Defendants arising from the
43 fact that they were not previously afforded the relief described herein as pertains to the
44 Missed Asylum Interview Claim.

1 i. The relief described in this Agreement in Section III.A.4., shall
2 apply to Missed Asylum Interview Subclass members who have filed or will file an
3 asylum application with USCIS and who have not yet had that application referred to an
4 immigration judge at the time that the Defendants implement these settlement terms, and
5 shall apply prospectively. This paragraph does not preclude any Class member from
6 seeking relief under the provisions of the Affirmative Asylum Procedures Manual dated
7 November 2007 (revised July 2010) pre-dating this Agreement in Section I (1), page. 91-
8 92, regarding post-referral review of exceptional circumstances.
9

10 5. Remand Claim.
11

12 a. Following a BIA remand of a case for the adjudication of an
13 asylum claim, whether on appeal from an immigration judge decision or following a
14 remand from a U.S. Court of Appeals, for purposes of EAD eligibility, the applicant will
15 be credited with the number of days that elapsed between the initial immigration judge
16 denial and the date of the BIA remand order. In addition, the applicant will accrue time
17 creditable toward employment authorization from the date of the BIA remand order going
18 forward, exclusive of applicant caused delays. An asylum applicant seeking employment
19 authorization must attach a copy of the complete BIA order remanding the case for the
20 adjudication of an asylum claim to the immigration court to his or her application for
21 employment authorization.
22

23 b. Remand Subclass members who have appeared or who will appear
24 before EOIR prior to the Defendants' implementation of these settlement terms shall not
25 have a cause of action against the Defendants arising from the fact that they were not
26 previously afforded the relief described herein as pertains to the Remand Claim.
27

28 c. The relief described in this Agreement in Section III.A.5. shall
29 apply to all Remand Subclass members whose asylum cases have been remanded and
30 whose asylum cases are pending before EOIR at the time the Defendants implement these
31 settlement terms, and shall apply prospectively. Defendants will implement these
32 resolutions within six (6) months of the Effective Date of this Agreement.
33

34 B. EADs for Named Plaintiffs. The named plaintiffs and relatives of named
35 plaintiffs who received limited 240-day EADs pursuant to the Parties' earlier agreement
36 will remain eligible for one-year renewals of their EADs for so long as their asylum
37 applications remain pending.
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1 **IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Parties have executed this Agreement, which may be
2 executed in counterparts and the undersigned represent that they are authorized to execute
3 and deliver this Agreement on behalf of the respective Parties.
4

5 Consented and agreed to by:

6
7 DATED: September 18, 2013

Respectfully submitted,

8
9 **STUART F. DELERY**
10 Acting Assistant Attorney General
11 Civil Division

12
13 **DAVID J. KLINE**
14 Director

15
16 **COLIN A. KISOR**
17 Deputy Director

18
19
20 /s/ J. Max Weintraub
21 **J. MAX WEINTRAUB**
22 Senior Litigation Counsel
23 United States Department of Justice
24 Civil Division
25 Office of Immigration Litigation
26 District Court Section
27 P.O. Box 868, Ben Franklin Station
28 Washington, DC 20044
29 Phone: (202) 305-7551
30 Fax: (202) 305-7000
31 Email: jacob.weintraub@usdoj.gov

32
33 **JENNY A. DURKAN**
34 United States Attorney

35
36 /s/ Priscilla T. Chan
37 **PRISCILLA T. CHAN**, WSBA# 28533
38 Assistant United States Attorney
39 Western District of Washington
40 700 Stewart Street, Suite 5220
41 Seattle, Washington 98101-1271
42 Phone: 206-553-7970
43 Fax: 206-553-4073
44 Email: priscilla.chan@usdoj.gov
45 Attorneys for Defendants
46
47

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s/ Matt Adams
s/ Christopher Strawn
Matt Adams #28287
Christopher Strawn #32243
NORTHWEST IMMIGRANT RIGHTS
PROJECT
615 2nd Avenue, Suite 400
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 587-4009 ext. 111
(206) 587-4025 (Fax)
Email: matt@nwirp.org
Email: chris@nwirp.org

Melissa Crow
Mary Kenney
Emily Creighton
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL
1331 G Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 507-7512
(202) 742-5619 (Fax)
Email: mcrow@immcouncil.org
Email: mkenney@immcouncil.org
Email: ecreighton@immcouncil.org

Robert H. Gibbs
Robert Pauw
GIBBS HOUSTON PAUW
1000 Second Avenue, Suite 1600
Seattle, WA 98104
(206) 224-8790
(206) 689-2270 (Fax)
Email: rgibbs@ghp-law.net
Email: rpauw@ghp-law.net

Iris Gomez
MASSACHUSETTS LAW REFORM
INSTITUTE
99 Chauncy Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 357-0700 x. 331
(617) 357-0777 (Fax)
Email: igomez@mlri.org
Attorneys for Plaintiffs