

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

May 5, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Tracy Renaud
Acting Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Dear Acting Director Renaud:

I write to you today regarding the recent arrest of a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) immigration services officer, Mr. Modestus Nwagubwu Ifemembi – who has used a number of false names during his time in the United States – on a federal charge of obtaining American citizenship under a false name.¹

This case is particularly concerning given the fact that, in addition to being able to remain in the United States under false pretenses for over 20 years, Mr. Ifemembi was actually hired and employed by USCIS as an immigration services officer for seven years² – the very agency that is tasked with administering the nation’s lawful immigration system and “safeguarding its integrity and promise.”³

According to the Department of Justice, Mr. Ifemembi was able to obtain asylum in 2000, even after being caught with a fraudulent British passport upon his arrival in the United States.⁴ At that time, he also gave authorities a false name and home country.⁵ He went on to attend college and law school in the United States before applying for U.S. citizenship in 2010 and requesting a change to his surname.⁶ His name change and citizenship were both granted in 2011 during the Obama Administration.⁷

Shockingly, he was then hired by the Obama Administration’s USCIS in 2013 and worked as an adjudicator for seven years.⁸ For seven years, USCIS employed an individual who had committed major immigration fraud and made false statements on numerous government forms to make adjudication decisions on those same forms and petitions for other aliens seeking immigration benefits in the United States. In addition to being an embarrassing abrogation of USCIS’s mission to

¹ Press Release, United States Department of Justice, Federal Immigration Official Originally from Nigeria Charged with Illegally Obtaining U.S. Citizenship under Fake Identity (April 7, 2021), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/federal-immigration-official-originally-nigeria-charged-illegally-obtaining-us>

² *Id.*

³ *Mission and Core Values*, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *available at* <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/mission-and-core-values>

⁴ Press Release, *supra* note 1

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Stephen Dinan, *DHS hired asylum fraudster to work as immigration officer, prosecutors say*, WASHINGTON TIMES (April 7, 2021), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/apr/7/dhs-hired-asylum-fraudster-work-immigration-office/>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Press Release, *supra* note 1

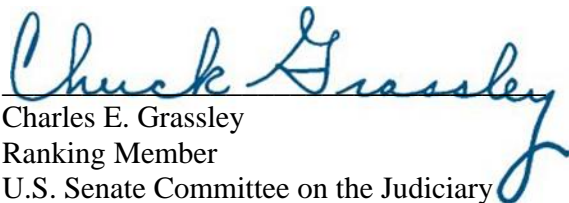
safeguard the integrity of our nation's legal immigration system, this case raises a number of serious questions about USCIS's vetting procedures, Mr. Ifemembi's work at USCIS, and how the agency is responding to these disturbing allegations.

Accordingly, please answer the following questions no later than May 19, 2021:

1. What triggered the investigation into Mr. Ifemembi and his background by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General and the USCIS Office of Investigations?
2. Does USCIS have any evidence that Mr. Ifemembi engaged in any other criminality or fraud during his tenure as an immigration services officer?
3. Does USCIS have evidence indicating that any other current or former USCIS employees were aware or likely aware of Mr. Ifemembi's fraudulent identity? If so, for each such current or former employee, please (1) provide a list of each and every directorate or program office in which they currently work or previously worked during their tenure at USCIS and (2) describe what action the agency has taken with respect to each such employee or former employee.
4. Is USCIS undertaking a review of each and every benefit application adjudicated by Mr. Ifemembi during his tenure at the agency and, where appropriate, taking remedial measures?
5. Given that Mr. Ifemembi was caught with a fraudulent passport before receiving asylum under a false identity in 2000, please explain what steps were taken to verify his identity prior to the decision to grant asylum.
6. In light of the failure to catch Mr. Ifemembi's fraudulent identity in 2000, please explain what changes USCIS has made to the asylum vetting process since that time and whether or not the current vetting process would catch Mr. Ifemembi's identity fraud if he applied for asylum today.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Should you have questions, please contact Drew Robinson of my staff at 202-224-5225.

Sincerely,


Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary

CC: The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security