U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

**Non-Precedent Decision of the Administrative Appeals Office**

In Re: 32495539

Date: AUG. 14, 2024

Appeal of Texas Service Center Decision

Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers (National Interest Waiver)

The Petitioner, a chief executive officer (CEO) of a specialty lighting company, seeks employment-based second preference (EB-2) immigrant classification as either a member of the professions holding an advanced degree or an individual of exceptional ability, as well as a national interest waiver of the job offer requirement attached to this EB-2 classification. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) section 203(b)(2), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2).

The Director of the Texas Service Center denied the petition, concluding that the Petitioner had not established that the Petitioner qualified for the requested classification and that a discretionary waiver of the required job offer, and thus of the labor certification, would be in the national interest. The matter is now before us on appeal pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 103.3.

The Petitioner bears the burden of proof to demonstrate eligibility by a preponderance of the evidence. *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 375-76 (AAO 2010). We review the questions in this matter de novo. *Matter of Christo's, Inc.*, 26 I&N Dec. 537, 537 n.2 (AAO 2015). Upon de novo review, we will dismiss the appeal.

## I. LAW

To establish eligibility for a national interest waiver, a petitioner must first demonstrate qualification for the underlying EB-2 visa classification, as either an advanced degree professional or an individual of exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business. Section 203(b)(2)(B)(i) of the Act. Because this classification requires that the individual's services be sought by a U.S. employer, a separate showing is required to establish that a waiver of the job offer requirement is in the national interest.

While neither the statute nor the pertinent regulations define the term "national interest," we set forth a framework for adjudicating national interest waiver petitions in the precedent decision *Matter of Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. 884 (AAO 2016). *Dhanasar* states that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may, as matter of discretion,[1] grant a national interest waiver of the job offer, and thus the labor certification, to a petitioner classified in the EB-2 category if the petitioner demonstrates that (1) the noncitizen's proposed endeavor has both substantial merit and national importance; (2) the

[1] *See also Poursina v. USCIS*, 936 F.3d 868 (9th Cir. 2019) (finding USCIS' decision to grant or deny a national interest waiver to be discretionary in nature).

noncitizen is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor; and (3) that on balance it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.

The first prong, substantial merit and national importance, focuses on the specific endeavor that the noncitizen proposes to undertake. The endeavor's merit may be demonstrated in a range of areas such as business, entrepreneurialism, science, technology, culture, health, or education. In determining whether the proposed endeavor has national importance, we consider its potential prospective impact.

The second prong shifts the focus from the proposed endeavor to the noncitizen. To determine whether the noncitizen is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor, we consider factors including but not limited to the individual's education, skills, knowledge, and record of success in related or similar efforts. A model or plan for future activities, progress towards achieving the proposed endeavor, and the interest of potential customers, users, investors, or other relevant entities or individuals are also key considerations.

The third prong requires the petitioner to demonstrate that, on balance of applicable factors, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification. USCIS may evaluate factors such as whether, in light of the nature of the noncitizen's qualification or the proposed endeavor, it would be impractical either for the noncitizen to secure a job offer or for the petitioner to obtain a labor certification; whether, in light of the nature of the noncitizen's qualification or the proposed endeavor, it would be impractical either for the noncitizen to secure a job offer or for the petitioner to obtain a labor certification; whether, even assuming that other qualified U.S. workers are available, the United States would still benefit from the noncitizen's contributions; and whether the national interest in the noncitizen's contributions is sufficiently urgent to warrant forgoing the labor certification process. Each of the factors considered must, taken together, indicate that on balance it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.

## II. ANALYSIS

The Petitioner proposes to work in the United States as a CEO. The Director of the Texas Service Center denied the petition, concluding that the Petitioner did not establish that he qualified for the underlying EB-2 classification as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree or an individual of exceptional ability. The Director determined that although the Petitioner met at least three of the six criteria, the record lacked evidence that the Petitioner's degree of expertise is significantly above that which is ordinarily encountered in the sciences, arts, or business.

### A. EB-2 Classification

With respect to the underlying EB-2 classification, the Petitioner contends that the Director erroneously misapplied the relevant law and overlooked evidence. The Petitioner further argues that he is a member of the professions holding an advanced degree, and that he possesses a level of

expertise significantly above the ordinary, "making him a true asset to the business of specialty lighting."

The resolution of the issues pertaining to the Petitioner's eligibility for a waiver of the job offer requirement, and thus of a labor certification, under the *Dhanasar* analytical framework are dispositive of this appeal. For that reason, we will reserve consideration of the Petitioner's eligibility for the requested EB-2 category. *See INS v. Bagamasbad*, 429 U.S. 24, 25 (1976) (stating that agencies need not make "purely advisory findings" on issues unnecessary to their ultimate decisions); *see also Matter of L-A-C-*, 26 I&N Dec. 516, 526 n.7 (BIA 2015) (declining to reach alternate issues on appeal in removal proceedings where an applicant did not otherwise qualify for relief).

B. The Proposed Endeavor's Substantial Merit and National Importance

The record shows that the Petitioner's proposed endeavor is to operate his company, [redacted] which aims to expand within the U.S. and internationally by offering consulting services across three key areas, commercial management advisory, partnership enablement, and export consulting. The Petitioner explains that his company will conduct thorough analyses of clients' commercial operations and craft tailored sales strategies, streamline the expansion of sales for special lamps into different countries, and provide a comprehensive approach to export process. The Director acknowledged that the Petitioner's proposed endeavor has substantial merit, and that he is well-positioned to advance the proposed endeavor. The Director determined, however, that the Petitioner did not establish the proposed endeavor is of national importance, and that, on balance, it would benefit the United States to waive the job offer requirement.

On appeal, the Petitioner contends that the Director misapplied the legal standard and failed to conduct a proper review of the submitted evidence. For the reasons provided below, we conclude that the Petitioner has not established the national importance of his proposed endeavor and therefore is not eligible for a national interest waiver as a matter of discretion. While we do not discuss every piece of evidence individually, we have reviewed and considered each one.

As previously noted, the first prong, substantial merit and national importance, focuses on the specific endeavor that the noncitizen proposes to undertake. The endeavor's merit may be demonstrated in a range of areas such as business, entrepreneurialism, science, technology, culture, health, or education. In determining whether the proposed endeavor has national importance, we consider its potential prospective impact.

The Petitioner maintains that his endeavor will significantly contribute to the nation's trade balance, enhance the economic reach of the country's manufacturers, support job creation both domestically and internationally, and will reduce unemployment. To evaluate whether the Petitioner's proposed endeavor satisfies the national importance requirement we look to evidence documenting the "potential prospective impact" of the Petitioner's work. While the Petitioner claims that his company's operations will cause a "ripple effect on the economy," the Petitioner has not offered sufficient information and evidence to demonstrate that the prospective impact of his proposed endeavor rises to the level of national importance. In *Dhanasar*, we determined that the petitioner's teaching activities did not rise to the level of having national importance because they would not impact his field more broadly. *Id.* at 893. Here, the record does not include adequate corroborating

evidence, to show that the Petitioner's specific proposed endeavor offers broader implications in the specialty lighting field, enhancements to U.S. societal welfare, or substantial positive economic effects for the country that rise to the level of national importance.

The Petitioner argues that his proposed endeavor will significantly boost the local economy by injecting money through employee salaries, job creation, and increase tax revenues. The Petitioner, through his business plan, claims that his company will hire 20 direct employees by year five as well as garner net sales of $1,912,294. Further, the Petitioner claims that a Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II) projects that the company will create 125 jobs in the next five years. The Petitioner, however, does not provide sufficient detail of the basis of these projections, or adequately explain how these staffing targes and revenue forecasts will be realized. The Petitioner must support his assertions with relevant, probative, and credible evidence. *See Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. at 376. Without sufficient evidence regarding the projected U.S. economic impact or job creation directly attributable to his future work, the record does not show that the benefits to the regional or national economy resulting from the Petitioner's endeavor would reach the level of "substantial positive economic effects" contemplated by *Dhanasar*. *Id.* at 890.

The Petitioner contends his endeavor is "set to create a substantial positive impact on the U.S. economy" through direct and indirect job creation, sectoral growth, international trade balance contributions, innovation promotion, and skill development. The Petitioner further argues that his extensive professional experience and business acumen will be key to achieving these goals. Though we acknowledge the Petitioner's experience and skill set, the record does not show through supporting documentation how his specific company stands to sufficiently extend beyond his prospective clients to impact the industry or the U.S. economy more broadly at a level commensurate with national importance. Moreover, although an individual's experience, qualifications, contributions, and achievements are material, they are misplaced in the context of the first *Dhanasar* prong. The Petitioner's educational background and professional experience are material to *Dhanasar's* second prong—whether an individual is well positioned to advance a proposed endeavor—but they are generally immaterial to the first *Dhanasar* prong—whether a specific, prospective, proposed endeavor has both substantial merit and national importance. *See id.* at 888-91.

The Petitioner also argues that his endeavor aligns with the government's ENERGY STAR program and other national initiatives. The author of the expert opinion letter emphasizes the importance of the specialty lighting industry. The author underscores the Petitioner's professional experience and claims that the Petitioner's company's focus on the specialty lighting industry aligns with "broader economic and technological trends." Although we acknowledge the Petitioner's assertions and the submitted evidence, the record does not establish how the proposed endeavor will have broader implications beyond benefitting the Petitioner's clients and companies he elects to work with. Moreover, in determining national importance, the relevant question is not the importance of the industry or profession in which the individual will work. Instead, we focus on the "the specific endeavor that the foreign national proposes to undertake." *Id.* at 889. *See Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. at 889. In *Dhanasar*, we further noted that "we look for broader implications" of the proposed endeavor and that "[a]n undertaking may have national importance for example, because it has national or even global implications within a particular field." *Id.* We also stated that "[a]n endeavor that has significant potential to employ U.S. workers or has other substantial positive economic effects, particularly in an economically depressed area, for instance, may well be understood to have national

importance." *Id.* at 890. Here, the Petitioner has not sufficiently explained how he will positively impact the U.S. economy and create direct and indirect jobs to move the U.S. economy on a broad scale rising to the level of national importance.

It is insufficient to claim an endeavor has national importance or will create a broad impact without providing evidence to corroborate such claims. The Petitioner must support his assertions with relevant, probative, and credible evidence. *See Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 376 (AAO 2010). He has not done so.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Petitioner's proposed work does not meet the first prong of the *Dhanasar* framework. Because the documentation in the record does not establish the national importance of his proposed endeavor as required by the first prong of the *Dhanasar* precedent decision, the Petitioner has not demonstrated eligibility for a national interest waiver. Since this issue is dispositive of the Petitioner's appeal, we decline to reach and also hereby reserve the appellate arguments regarding his eligibility under the second and third prongs outlined in *Dhanasar*. *See INS v. Bagamasbad*, 429 U.S. 24, 25 (1976) ("courts and agencies are not required to make findings on issues the decision of which is unnecessary to the results they reach"); *see also Matter of L-A-C-*, 26 I&N Dec. 516, 526 n.7 (BIA 2015) (declining to reach alternative issues on appeal where an applicant is otherwise ineligible).

## III. CONCLUSION

As the Petitioner has not met the *Dhanasar* analytical framework's requisite first prong, we conclude that he has not established that he is eligible for or otherwise merits a national interest waiver as a matter of discretion. The appeal will be dismissed for the above stated reasons.

**ORDER:** The appeal is dismissed.