Template Email to Request a Rescheduled Asylum Office Interview

To: Chicago.Asylum@uscis.dhs.gov

Subject: Emergency request to reschedule AO interview due to COVID-19

Dear Asylum Office:

I represent [client/A#]. My G28 is already on file. My client is currently scheduled for an asylum office interview on [date/time]. I am requesting that you reschedule this interview for at least two-four weeks in light of the covid-19 pandemic.

As you know, the world is confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary reports from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) indicate that the virus is primarily spread between people who are in close contact. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/transmission.html>) The virus can also be spread before people show symptoms. *Id.* The virus can remain alive on surfaces--such as USCIS chairs, doors, and deskspace--for days. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/cleaning-disinfection.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fhome%2Fcleaning-disinfection.html>) The pandemic has caused the President to issue a national declaration of emergency. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-members-coronavirus-task-force-press-conference-3/>) Additionally, COVID-19 cases are present in Chicago, Illinois, Cook County, and throughout the state. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker issued a state of emergency decree and both he and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot have asked the public to reduce contact to the maximum extent possible. (<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>)

To slow the spread of the virus, the CDC advises individuals to increase their physical distance from other people to about 6 feet. *Id.* Consequently, social gatherings, business conferences, sporting events and religious ceremonies have been cancelled or postponed across the nation. Most recently, the CDC has recommended that for the next eight weeks, events consisting of 50 people or more be cancelled or postponed. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html>)

For these reasons, on March 15, 2020, the National Association of Immigration Judges, the ICE Professionals Union, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association called for the emergency closure of the immigration courts. “Immigration Judges, Prosecutors, and Attorneys Call for the Nationwide Closure of All Immigration Courts,” <https://www.aila.org/advo-media/issues/all/covid-19> (last accessed March 16, 2020). Later that night, EOIR announced that all non-detained master calendar hearings scheduled through April 10, 2020 would be postponed.

It is impossible to comply with the medical professional’s advice in a USCIS/Asylum Office where applicants, their lawyers, staff, and security, convene in small quarters. Indeed, requiring attendance in such a setting runs contrary to the advice of the CDC and other medical professionals.

Even within the firm of the undersigned, we have taken the following precautions in order to protect the health of our staff, our clients, and our community, and to comply with the recommendations of the CDC and our local officials: [LIST].

[If applicable] In addition, my client must utilize public transportation in order to attend the interview, placing [his/her] health at risk to attend the upcoming interview. Moreover, health and safety restrictions have significantly prejudiced my ability to prepare my client for this interview. [Provide examples as applicable.]

[If any members of the applicant’s family or counsel’s team are high risk, add here]

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you reschedule my client’s interview for at least two-four weeks, or until the CDC and the state of Illinois lift their current bans and guidelines.