

## H-1B Worker Domestic Visa Renewal Pilot Program

The State Department (DOS) recently announced a new pilot program for H-1B visa holders, allowing them to renew their H-1B visa stamps while remaining in the United States. Currently, H-1B visa holders must apply at a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad to renew their visa stamps. Foreign nationals often have to plan work and travel schedules around their scheduled consular visits.

The new pilot program aims to alleviate massive wait times at consulates abroad. Currently, the average wait time for a visa appointment globally is 130 days. DOS aims to reduce wait times to 90 days. DOS is also taking steps to extend visa interview waivers for certain foreign nationals applying for visa stamps at U.S. consulates abroad.

DOS plans to initially open the domestic visa renewal option to 20,000 H-1B visa holders. With more than 500,000<sup>1</sup> H-1B workers currently in the United States, this pilot program will serve only a fraction of the H-1B population. Information about how initial pilot program participants will be selected has not yet been released. The full details of the program are expected to be published in the Federal Register in December, and the program will roll out in January 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services & Office of Policy & Strategy, Policy Research Division. (2019). *H-1B Authorized-to-Work Population Estimate*.



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