

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: September 11, 2025

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso
Chief Legislative Analyst

me for SMT

Council File No.: 25-0002-S74
Assignment No.: 25-08-0670

SUBJECT: Resolution (Rodriguez – Soto-Martínez, et al.) to SUPPORT legislative and/or administrative action to increase the annual cap for U Visas

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Rodriguez – Soto-Martínez, et al.) to include in the City's 2025-2026 Federal Legislative Program, SUPPORT for any legislative and/or administrative action that will increase the annual cap for U Visas in the U.S.

SUMMARY

Resolution (Rodriguez – Soto-Martínez, et al.), introduced on August 8, 2025, states that the U non-immigrant status was established in 2000 to offer protections to victims of criminal activities and assist with the investigation and prosecution of certain crimes, including murder, human trafficking, sexual assault, and domestic violence, among others. The Resolution further states that victims of qualifying crimes who are helpful in the investigation or prosecution of the crime can request certification from a law enforcement agency to apply for U visa status to remain and work in the U.S. The Resolution states that the nationwide annual cap for U Visas has remained at 10,000 since 2009, but the number of U Visa petitions received each year has exceeded the cap since 2011 and resulted in a backlog, with applicants waiting five to ten years to receive a final decision. In July 2025, the Board of Police Commissioners reported that the Police Department has certified more than 2,000 U Visa requests since 2023 and anticipates that they will receive up to 3,000 requests in 2025. The Resolution states that an increase in the annual cap for U Visas will reduce wait times for applicants, encourage victims to report crimes and offer them more protections, assist law enforcement with investigations, and improve overall safety. The Resolution requests that the City support legislative and/or administrative action to increase the annual cap for U Visas in the U.S.

BACKGROUND

The U Visa was established by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 and allows non-citizen victims of crimes and their family members to live and work in the U.S. A non-citizen may be eligible for a U Visa if they suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of having been a victim of certain criminal activity; possess information concerning that criminal activity; and has been, is being, or is likely to be helpful in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity that occurred in the U.S.

The U Visa program is overseen by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which maintains an annual limit of 10,000 U Visas per year, not including spouses or other derivative family members. Since 2010, the number of U Visa petitions submitted to USCIS has exceeded the annual cap, which has created a large backlog of petitions and long wait times to receive a final decision for an application. According to USCIS data from September 2025, 80 percent of U Visa applications are processed within 30.5 months, or two and a half years.

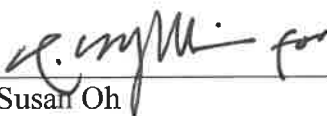
If the annual cap is reached before all U Visa applications have been adjudicated, U Visa applicants and their family members are placed on a waiting list and may receive employment authorization and deferred action, which allows them to remain in the U.S., as they wait for a visa to become available. Once additional visas become available, applicants on the waiting list will receive visas in the order in which their petition was received.

The annual cap for principal U Visas was established by Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 and will require Congressional action to change. Hiring additional adjudication officers at USCIS could shorten the wait times for U Visa applicants, but would not address the continued demand for U Visas outweighing availability.

The Police Department and the Office of the City Attorney process U Visa requests for the City. The City received 2,598 U Visa certification requests in 2023, 2,976 requests in 2024, and is on track to receive more than 3,000 requests in 2025. U Visa certifications issued by the Police Department and City Attorney's Office are only valid for six months. The Police Department reports that delays in obtaining copies of police reports and with federal U Visa processing create additional burdens for victims and law enforcement, as they can sometimes require U visa re-certifications, straining already limited departmental resources, and potentially costing additional legal fees for U Visa applicants.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

Community Investment for Families Department
Police Department



Susan Oh
Analyst

Attachments: Resolution (Rodriguez – Soto-Martínez, et al.)

RESOLUTION

RULES, ELECTIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, which established the U nonimmigrant status (U Visa) to offer protections to victims of qualifying criminal activities and strengthen the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute certain qualifying crimes; and

WHEREAS, these crimes include rape, torture, trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, involuntary servitude, kidnapping, and murder, among others; and

WHEREAS, victims of qualifying criminal activities who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse; possess information relevant to the crime; are helpful in the investigation or prosecution of the crime; and receive certification from an authorized official at a law enforcement agency are eligible to apply for U-Visa status to remain in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 provided an annual cap of 10,000 U Visas nationwide, which has remained unchanged since U Visas were first issued in 2009; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data shows that the number of U-Visa petitions received each year has exceeded 10,000 since 2011, and has resulted in a growing backlog, with applicants waiting five to ten years to receive a final decision; and

WHEREAS, according to a July 2025 Board of Police Commissioners report, the Los Angeles Police Department, who processes U-Visa requests for victims of crimes that have occurred within the City, certified 2,108 U-Visa requests in 2023 and 2,426 requests in 2024, and expects to receive up to 3,000 requests in 2025; and

WHEREAS, while U-Visa applicants are eligible to receive employment authorization, deferred action, and in some cases, parole while their petitions are processing, the U Visa program must be right-sized and the annual cap should be increased by Congress; and

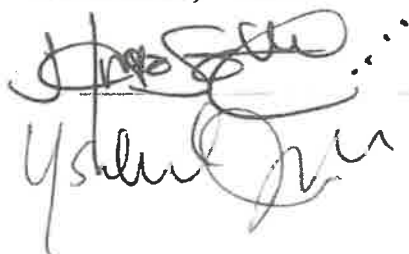
WHEREAS, an increase in the annual U-Visa cap would allow USCIS to process more applications, reduce wait times for eligible applicants, and offer protections to more victims of serious crimes, as well as foster collaboration between law enforcement and vulnerable communities; encourage victims and witnesses to come forward to report crimes; and improve safety for the entire community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that by adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2025-26 Federal Legislative Program, SUPPORT for any legislative and/or administrative action that would increase the annual cap for U Visas in the United States.


PRESENTED BY


MONICA RODRIGUEZ
Councilmember, 7th District

SECONDED BY:


Yshen

SO


AUG 9 8 2025
AUG 0 8 2025

ORIGINAL