

Statement of Tahmina Watson

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On

“Oh, Canada! How Outdated U.S. Immigration Policies Push Top Talent to Other Countries”

Before the Committee on the Judiciary House
Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship

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Via Electronic Mail

U.S. House Judiciary Committee
Immigration and Citizenship Subcommittee
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Committee Hearing “Oh, Canada! How Outdated U.S. Immigration Policies Push Top Talent to Other Countries”

Dear Member of the U.S. House Judiciary Immigration and Citizenship Subcommittee,

My name is Tahmina Watson. I am an immigration attorney in Seattle, Washington. I immigrated from London, England in 2005 when I married my husband, Thomas Watson, a patent attorney at Amin, Turocy and Watson, LLP. I have two daughters, Sofia (11) and Sarina (9). In 2011, I became a U.S. citizen¹. I am the founder of Watson Immigration Law, and currently have six employees.

As an immigrant myself, I believe it is a privilege to help others realize their dreams, whether they are employers seeking talented workers, business starting new companies or family members being reunited. Yet I have found that, for entrepreneurs, our current immigration law is falling far short of its potential.

In 2009, when I founded Watson Immigration Law, I immediately saw a recurring problem: people with a strong desire to start their own companies were stuck in the green card backlog. The lack of a suitable visa crippled any opportunity for them to put their skills to work. And the problem wasn't limited to those in the U.S. either. Innovative entrepreneurs from all over the world with similar goals were equally stymied by our outdated laws. In 2010, the Startup Visa Act was introduced in Congress, the first standalone startup visa bill we've ever had. It was then that I became more passionate than ever about this issue.

I followed the path of the Startup Visa Act closely over the ensuing years². During that time, I continued to advise and represent hundreds of individuals and businesses looking to start and continue operating companies here: Some were successful, some left the United States permanently and others never made it here at all. I continued to advocate passionately as each iteration of the bill was introduced year after year. Eventually, after watching one failed attempt after another, I wrote a book, *The Startup Visa: Key to Job*

¹ An immigration lawyer is humbled by her own process of becoming a U.S. citizen, The Seattle Times, July 1, 2011

² Invest Visa Senate Amendments: A Proud Moment for Watson Immigration Law, Watson Immigration Law Blog, June 13, 2013

Growth and Economic Prosperity in 2015. In it I share some of my client stories. The foreword was written by Vivek Wadhwa, author of *The Immigrant Exodus*³, a profoundly important book on this topic. Mr. Wadhwa stated my book “provides valuable policy advice and a guide for entrepreneurs hoping to navigate some of the treacherous waters of the American immigration system.” With a new administration and renewed hope for advocacy, I updated the book, the second edition of which is set for publication this month. The new foreword is written by Brad Feld⁴, renowned author, venture capitalist, and co-founder of Techstars, startup accelerator. Mr. Feld states that my book “is more relevant today and essential reading for anyone who cares about the economy, job creation, and entrepreneurship in America.”

The bottom line is clear, we need a startup visa in the U.S.

I hereby submit an advance copy of my book for your records (hardcopy to follow in the mail upon publication).

To accompany the release of the book, I have also created a podcast series titled The Startup Visa on my podcast *Tahmina Talks Immigration* which can be found on all podcast platforms. Leading authorities on the issue discuss the necessity of a Startup Visa. I invite you to listen⁵.

As a business owner, I understand the Startup visa. As a practitioner, my views are different from those who deal only with policy. As an immigrant entrepreneur, I know about the hard work entrepreneurs devote to creating successful businesses. This potential new visa category is key to retaining talent, creating jobs, and helping to grow the U.S. economy. Immigration can be a tool for economic recovery and growth. And a Startup Visa is an important example of what immigration laws can do for this country. Without it, we stand to stymie such growth and lose the best and the brightest entrepreneurs to countries like Canada who understand the value and have created startup visas modeled after the U.S.’ version.

With sincere hopes of immigration reform this year, I wanted to stop nothing short of trying to make my voice heard by you directly. The United States needs a Startup Visa which has always garnered bipartisan support. I urge you to pass such legislation so we can continue to lead the world in innovation and job creation and growth.

Thank you for reading my statement.

Sincerely,



Tahmina Watson

³ *The Immigrant Exodus: Why America Is Losing the Global Race to Capture Entrepreneurial Talent*, Vivek Wadhwa, 2012

⁴ www.techstars.com/mission

⁵ Tahmina Talks Immigration on Apple Podcasts