

(2) Currently maintaining F–1 status, and

(3) Experiencing severe economic hardship as a direct result of the ongoing civil unrest in Syria since March 2011.

ICE records show that as of January 23, 2018, there are approximately 620 Syrian F–1 visa holders in active status who would be covered by this notice. This notice applies to elementary school, middle school, high school, undergraduate, and graduate students. This notice, however, applies differently to elementary school, middle school, and high school students (see the discussion published at 77 FR 20040, available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-04-03/pdf/2012-7960.pdf>, in the question, “Does this notice apply to elementary school, middle school, and high school students in F–1 status?”).

F–1 students covered by this notice who transfer to other academic institutions that are SEVP-certified for enrollment of F–1 students remain eligible for the relief provided by means of this notice.

#### Why is DHS taking this action?

DHS took action to provide temporary relief to F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria and who experienced severe economic hardship because of the civil unrest in Syria since March 2011. See 77 FR 20038 (April 3, 2012). It enabled these F–1 students to obtain employment authorization, work an increased number of hours while school was in session, and reduce their course load, while continuing to maintain their F–1 student status. In June 2013, January 2015, and again in September 2016, DHS acknowledged that the the civil unrest in Syria continued to affect Syria’s citizens, with many people still displaced as a result. DHS extended the application of the original April 3, 2012, notice through March 31, 2018, to continue to provide temporary relief to Syrian F–1 students who experienced severe economic hardship as a result of the conflict. Despite DHS’s determination that the civil conflict in Syria continued well beyond the October 3, 2013, expiration date of the original notice, temporary relief was not made available to Syrian F–1 students who became lawfully present in the United States in F–1 nonimmigrant status after April 3, 2012. On September 9, 2016, however, DHS published a notice extending the application of the temporary relief in the original April 3, 2012 notice to those Syrian F–1 nonimmigrant students who lawfully obtained F–1 nonimmigrant status

between April 3, 2012, and September 9, 2016.

The conflict in Syria continues to affect the physical and economic security of its citizens. There are more than 11.7 million displaced Syrians in the region, both inside Syria and in neighboring countries, plus nearly 1 million Syrians have applied for asylum in Europe. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported over 2.8 million civilians displaced in 2017 alone, many for the second or third time. Since the beginning of the conflict, as many as 500,000 Syrians are dead or missing.

As a result of the civil war and conflict, food and water insecurity continues to have a major negative impact on the population of Syria. As of September 2017, the United Nations World Food Program assessed that food production in Syria was at an all-time low and that the situation was showing no sign of improving. Due to an 800 percent increase in the consumer food price index between 2010 and 2016, 90 percent of Syrian households now spend over half of their income on food, compared with 25 percent before the crisis. As of March 2017, 51 percent of Syrians lacked regular access to the public water system, relying instead on unregulated systems not tested for water purity. Schools and hospitals are significantly impacted by the lack of basic levels of sanitation, as well as the destruction of many facilities.

Furthermore, the conflict continues to negatively affect the Syrian economy. In 2017, the World Bank Group issued a report detailing the economic and social consequences of the conflict in Syria, estimating \$226 billion in lost GDP since the conflict erupted, a figure equal to about four times the Syrian GDP in 2010. World Bank Grp., *The Toll of War: The Economic and Social Consequences of the Conflict in Syria* 83 (2017), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/27541/The%20Toll%20of%20War.pdf>.

Given the conditions in Syria, affected students whose primary means of financial support come from Syria may need to be exempt from the normal student employment requirements to be able to continue their studies in the United States and meet basic living expenses.

The United States is committed to continuing to assist the people of Syria. DHS is therefore extending this employment authorization for F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria, who lawfully obtained F–1 nonimmigrant student status by September 9, 2016, and who are continuing to experience severe

economic hardship as a result of the civil unrest since March 2011.

#### How do I apply for employment authorization under the circumstances of this notice?

F–1 nonimmigrant students whose country of citizenship is Syria who lawfully obtained F–1 nonimmigrant student status by September 9, 2016, and are experiencing severe economic hardship because of the civil unrest may apply for employment authorization under the guidelines described in 77 FR 20038. This notice extends the time period during which such F–1 students may seek employment due to the civil unrest. It does not impose any new or additional policies or procedures beyond those listed in the original notice. All interested F–1 students should follow the instructions listed in the original notice.

**Elaine C. Duke,**

*Deputy Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 2018–05206 Filed 3–14–18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 9111–28–P**

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR–7002–N–04]

#### 60 Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Urban County Qualification/New York Towns Qualification/Requalification Processes

**AGENCY:** Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The proposed information collection requirement described below will be submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act. The Department is soliciting public comments on the subject proposal.

**DATES:** *Comments due date:* May 14, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposal. Comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to: Colette Pollard, Departmental Paperwork Reduction Act Officer, QDAM, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW, Room 4160, Washington, DC 20410; telephone: 202–708–3400 (this is not a toll-free number) or email Ms. Pollard for a copy of the proposed form and other available information.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Gloria Coates, Senior Community Planning and Development Specialist, Entitlement Communities Division, Office of Block Grant Assistance, 451 7th Street, SW, Room 7282, Washington, DC 20410; telephone (202) 708-1577 (this is not a toll-free number).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice informs the public that HUD is seeking approval form OMB for the information collection described in Section A.

**A. Overview of Information Collection**

*Title of Information Collection:* Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Urban County Qualification/ New York Towns Qualification/ Requalification Processes.

*OMB Approval Number:* 2506-0170.

*Type of Request:* Extension.

*Form numbers:* N/A.

*Description of the need for the information and proposed use:* The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, at sections 102(a)(6) and 102(e) requires that any county seeking qualification as an urban county notify each unit of general local government within the county that such unit may enter into a cooperation agreement to participate in the CDBG program as part of the county. Section 102(d) of the statute specifies that the period of qualification will be three years. Based on these statutory

provisions, counties seeking qualification or requalification as urban counties under the CDBG program must provide information to HUD every three years identifying the units of general local governments (UGLGs) within the county participating as a part of the county for purposes of receiving CDBG funds. The population of UGLGs for each eligible urban county is used in HUD's allocation of CDBG funds for all entitlement and State CDBG grantees.

New York towns undertook a similar process every three years. However, after consultation with program counsel, it was determined that a requalification process for New York towns is unnecessary because the units of general local government in New York towns do not have the same statutory notice rights (under Section 102(e) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974) as units of general local government participating in an urban county. However, those New York Towns may qualify as metropolitan cities if they are able to secure the participation of all of the villages located within their boundaries. Any New York Town that is located in an urban county may choose to leave that urban county when that county is requalifying to become a metropolitan city. That New York Town will be required to notify the urban county in advance of its decision to defer participation in the urban county's

CDBG program and complete the metropolitan city qualification process.

*Respondents:* (i.e. affected public): Urban counties that are eligible as entitlement grantees of the CDBG program.

*Estimation Number of Respondents:* There are currently 186 qualified urban counties participating in the CDBG program that must requalify every three years.

*Frequency of Response:* On average, one new county qualifies each year. The burden on new counties is greater than for existing counties that requalify. The Department estimates new grantees use, on average, 105 hours to review instructions, contact communities in the county, prepare and review agreements, obtain legal opinions, have agreements executed at the local and county level, and prepare and transmit copies of required documents to HUD. The Department estimates that counties that are requalifying use, on average, 65 hours to complete these actions. The time savings on requalification is primarily a result of a grantee's ability to use agreements with no specified end date. Use of such "renewable" agreements enables the grantee to merely notify affected participating UGLGs in writing that their agreement will automatically be renewed unless the UGLG terminates the agreement in writing, rather than executing a new agreement every three years.

	Hours	Hours
Average of 1 new urban county qualifies per year .....	1 × 110 =	110
186 grantees requalify on triennial basis; average annual number of respondents = 62 .....	62 × 65 =	4,030
Total combined burden hours .....	.....	4,135

This total number of combined burden hours can be expected to increase annually by 220 hours, given the average of two new urban counties becoming eligible entitlement grantees each year.

	Number of respondents	Number of responses per year	House per response annual	Total hours
Average no. of new urban counties that qualify per year .....	.....	1	110	110
No. of grantees that requalify on a triennial basis .....	186	62	65	4,030
Total combined hours .....	.....	.....	.....	4,135

**B. Solicitation of Public Comment**

This notice is soliciting comments from members of the public and affected parties concerning the collection of information described in Section A on the following:

(1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of

the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information;

(3) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those

who are to respond; including through the use of appropriate automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

HUD encourages interested parties to submit comment in response to these questions.

**Authority:** Section 3507 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35.

Dated: February 28, 2018.

**Lori Michalski,**

*Acting General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development.*

[FR Doc. 2018-05301 Filed 3-14-18; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4210-67-P**

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

[Docket No. FR-7002-N-05]

**60-Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan & Annual Performance Report**

**AGENCY:** Office of Community Planning and Development, HUD.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** HUD is seeking approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the information collection described below. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, HUD is requesting comment from all interested parties on the proposed collection of information. The purpose of this notice is to allow 60 days of public comment.

**DATES:** *Comments due date:* May 14, 2018.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit comments regarding this proposal. Comments should refer to the proposal by name and/or OMB Control Number and should be sent to: Colette Pollard, Reports Management Officer, QDAM, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Room 4176, Washington, DC

20410-5000; telephone 202-402-3400 (this is not a toll-free number) or email at [Colette.Pollard@hud.gov](mailto:Colette.Pollard@hud.gov) for a copy of the proposed forms or other available information. Persons with hearing or speech impairments may access this number through TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Elizabeth Hendrix, Office of Block Grant Assistance, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW, Washington, DC 20410; email Elizabeth Hendrix at [Elizabeth.S.Hendrix@hud.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.S.Hendrix@hud.gov) or telephone 202-402-7179. Persons with hearing or speech impairments may access this number through TTY by calling the toll-free Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. This is not a toll-free number. Copies of available documents submitted to OMB may be obtained from Ms. Pollard.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This notice informs the public that HUD is seeking approval from OMB for the information collection described in Section A.

**A. Overview of Information Collection**

*Title of Information Collection:* Consolidated Plan & Annual Performance Report.

*OMB Approval Number:* 2506-0117.

*Type of Request:* Extension.

*Form Number:* N/A.

*Description of the need for the information and proposed use:* The Departments collection of this information is in compliance with statutory provisions of the Cranston

Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 that requires participating jurisdictions to submit a Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (Section 105(b)); the 1974 Housing and Community Development Act, as amended, that requires states and localities to submit a Community Development Plan (Section 104(b)(4) and Section 104(m)); and statutory provisions of these Acts that requires states and localities to submit applications and reports for these formula grant programs. The information is needed to provide HUD with preliminary assessment as to the statutory and regulatory eligibility of proposed grantee projects for informing citizens of intended uses of program funds.

*Members of the Affected Public:* States and local governments participating in the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), the Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), the Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG), the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS/HIV Program (HOPWA) or the Housing Trust Fund (HTF).

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* 1,216 localities and 50 states.

*Estimated Number of Responses:* 1.

*Consolidated Plan & Performance Reports:* 2,432 localities, 100 states.\*

*Average Hours per Response:* 293 (localities), 741 (states).

*Total Estimated Burdens:* 393,338.

\* Includes combined Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan and separate performance report.

Information collection	Number of respondents	Frequency of response	Burden hours per response	Total U.S. burden hours	Hourly cost per response	Total annual cost
Consolidated Plan & Performance Reports:						
Localities .....	1216*	1	293	356,288	\$34**	\$12,113,792
States .....	50*	1	741	37,050	34**	1,259,700

\* Total number of respondents of 1,266 = sum of localities (1,216) and states (50). Total localities of 1,216 includes 1,209 entitlements + 3 non-entitlements (Hawaii, Kauai, Maui) and four Insular Areas (Guam, Mariana Islands, Samoa, Virgin Islands).

\*\* Estimates assume a blended hourly rate that is equivalent to a GS-12, Step 5, Federal Government Employee.

**B. Solicitation of Public Comment**

This notice is soliciting comments from members of the public and affected parties concerning the collection of information described in Section A on the following:

(1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information;

(3) Ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond; including through the use of appropriate automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

HUD encourages interested parties to submit comment in response to these questions.

**Authority:** Section 3507 of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35

Dated: March 1, 2018.

**Lori Michalski,**

*Acting General Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development.*

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