

Maria Fernanda Gandarez

Partner



New York, NY



mgandarez@pryorcashman.com



212.326.0168



With over 35 years of experience practicing immigration law, Maria Fernanda Gandarez has extensive knowledge of U.S. and international visa requirements. A partner and member of Pryor Cashman's Immigration Group, Maria is chair of the firm's Global Mobility Practice and counsels multinational corporate clients across various industries to help them to achieve their worldwide talent objectives.

Highly committed to her "white-glove," high-touch client service, Maria and her team have consistently been recognized as premier immigration attorneys by *Chambers*, *Legal 500*, and *Super Lawyers*, and Maria was named among the Best Women Lawyers in New York City by *Crain's New York Business*. *Chambers USA 2021* noted Maria's "deep experience in extraordinary ability petitions," with one client enthusing, "[s]he is very thorough, responsive, capable, always on top of things and good at keeping us informed."

Over the last decade, Maria has focused her practice on global mobility, assisting her multinational clients in U.S. and international immigration matters. This broad skillset includes acquiring temporary employment visas and permanent residence in over 185 countries; securing passports; getting documents legalized and/or apostilled in numerous jurisdictions; assisting with obtaining police records from various countries; advising clients on employer sanctions, discrimination, and employment verification procedures; and, with local team assistance, even counseling clients on the tax and general labor consequences of mergers & acquisitions, complex employee relocations, and other corporate restructurings around the globe.

In addition to her global mobility expertise, Maria heads up the firm's consular practice, which facilitates visa processing worldwide, including staying up-to-date on COVID-related consular closings, visa appointment availability, requests for expedited appointments, travel exemptions, and quarantine requirements. Well-versed in foreign governmental requirements and permanent establishment, Maria utilizes a vast global network of partners in over 185 countries to bring about swift resolutions for her clients. Her years of experience in each of these jurisdictions enable her to understand the culture, process, and procedures of these foreign entities, and she knows how, when and what to deliver to avoid the unnecessary back and forth that is so common when managing global mobility needs for large foreign multinationals.

Maria regularly works with a diverse client base and delivers a full range of immigration expertise to national and multinational corporate and individual clients across a broad spectrum of industries, including aviation, education, financial services, technology, pharmaceutical, fashion, food, and entertainment. Her most recent experience includes representing:

- A leading global company that provides ingredients found in foods, beverages, personal care items, pharmaceuticals, and many other products used worldwide, which was designated as an essential service

provider in numerous countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maria and her team assisted three critical employees relocating from Australia to various locations in North America to ensure that the company could optimize their delivery of critical goods. After approval and the submission of representations to the Australian government for an exit ban exemption based on employment in critical infrastructure (food industry), all three were approved.

- The leading importer of upscale beers in the U.S. in immigration matters, including strategic long- and short-term planning to meet unique workforce requirements and providing advice related to immigration issues associated with changing corporate structures and COVID-related international issues (including but not limited to travel, global visa issuance challenges, and consular processing advice.)
- A large, multinational information technology provider based in the U.K. with their inbound U.S. immigration matters following the recent acquisition of another U.S.-based company. With their U.S. staffing and customer base that doubled overnight, and in the midst of COVID-19, travel restrictions, embassy closures, and presidential proclamations occurring daily, efficient integration of the two companies was a critical yet significant undertaking. Maria quickly developed a strategy to expand the client's range of visa options and set an aggressive program of National Interest Exemptions to enable the client to continue operating at maximum capacity.
- A privately-held, full-service provider of electronic and physical security services in conjunction with an employee who entered the U.S. from Central America who secured TPS status following his B-1/B-2 visa expiration. Despite the challenges under the current immigration climate and his immigration status, Maria's team secured H-1B status after a challenging request for evidence (RFE). Her group then quickly filed a PERM application and I-140 for him. Despite various challenges, we were able to obtain a green card interview and consideration for the employee. This is an ongoing matter.
- A world-renowned hairdresser and entrepreneur for an O-1 Extraordinary Ability visa regarding the individual's new business venture - providing premier hair care and beauty products to a broader audience in the United States. The business is backed by several celebrity angel investors, who were eager to have the client come to the U.S. as soon as possible. After a complex request for evidence during the pandemic, Maria and her team secured approval and the visa was issued.
- A leading author in advice pertaining to resident location advice, as the individual wanted to be based in Europe while writing a current series of books about the continent. Due to a looming publication date, this issue needed to be settled promptly, so Maria identified the Global Talent Visa in the U.K. in order to provide the client with the flexibility to access Europe quickly. The first stage of the application, an endorsement from the Arts Council in the U.K., required reviewing the client's extensive body of work, including numerous reviews and awards in multiple languages, whittling it down to the best 10 items representing the high-level international recognition of their work. Based on the submission, the client received the Arts Council Endorsement within two weeks (as compared to the usual months-long timeline) and is currently approved to travel to the U.K. at their leisure.

A Trusted Expert

Maria has led various panel discussions and frequently speaks about current global immigration law topics at various industry events and organizations, including the New York State Bar Association International Section, the American Immigration Lawyers Association ("AILA") Fordham Law School, among others.

Pro Bono + Community

A strong supporter of pro bono service, Maria works with community outreach programs and churches to aid the immigrant community. Maria also provides pro-bono legal services to a global not-for-profit organization whose mission is to ensure the development of safe and accessible HIV vaccines for use throughout the world.

Services

- Immigration
- International
- Global Mobility

Education

- Rutgers University School of Law (J.D., 1988)
- Hood College (B.A., 1985)

Recognition

- Recognized as a top immigration attorney by *Chambers USA* (2015-25)
- Named to the *Lawdragon* 100 Leading Immigration Lawyers list (2024-25)
- Recognized in the *Mondaq Autumn Thought Leadership Awards* for Immigration under China (2024) and Immigration under the United States (2025)
- Recognized as a leading immigration attorney by *The Legal 500 US* (2012-21)
- Named to the *Super Lawyers – New York Metro* list in Immigration law (2011-25)
- Named among the top 100 "Leading Women Lawyers in New York City" by *Crain's* (2018)

Admissions

- New York
- New Jersey
- District of Columbia

Professional Affiliations

- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- New York State Bar Association
- New Jersey State Bar Association (Immigration Law Section)
- District of Columbia Bar Association
- Portuguese-American Chamber of Commerce (Member; Board of Directors)
- British-American Chamber of Commerce
- European American Chamber of Commerce
- National Association of Professional Women ("NAPW")
- National Employment Law Council ("NELC")
- Society for Human Resource Management ("SHRM")
- National Association for Women Lawyers ("NAWLS")

Languages

- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Italian
- French

Publications

April 20, 2026

Form I-9 Compliance Alert: Common Errors Now Carry Greater Risk

April 15, 2026

The EU Entry/Exit System Is Now Live — What Global Mobility Professionals Need to Know

March 23, 2026

Rising UK Sponsor Compliance Checks – Time to Review Your Program

March 16, 2026

Delays in Visa Processing in Several Countries Due to Conflict in Middle East

January 22, 2026

Pause on Issuance of Immigrant Visas (i.e., Permanent Residence or “Green cards”) for Nationals of 75 Countries Goes Into Effect January 21, 2026

January 20, 2026

U.S. Department of State Expands List of Countries Subject to Visa Bonds for B1/B2 Visas

January 15, 2026

Preparing for the New H-1B Cap Lottery Based on Wage-Level Selections

January 6, 2026

Schengen at Risk: EU Puts Caribbean Citizenship Visa-Free Access on the Line

January 6, 2026

Canada Citizenship By Descent: A New Era of Eligibility

January 5, 2026

Trump Administration Pauses Diversity Visa Program

December 18, 2025

Trump Administration Expands Travel Restrictions to Twenty Additional Countries

December 9, 2025

U.S. Department of State to Expand Social Media Vetting for H-1B Visa Applicants and Dependents

December 4, 2025

USCIS Pauses Immigration Benefits Requests for Individuals from Designated High-Risk Countries

December 4, 2025

Portugal Tightens Immigration Rules and Proposes Changes to Nationality Law

December 2, 2025

China Immigration Reforms for End of Year 2025

November 14, 2025

Planning for International Holiday Travel: Guidance for Foreign Nationals, Green Card Holders, and U.S. Citizens

November 10, 2025

Supreme Court Allows Trump Administration to Deny Changes to Gender Markers on Passports

October 31, 2025

Department of Homeland Security Ends Automatic Extension of Employment Authorization Documents (EADs), with Limited Exceptions

October 24, 2025

Update: Potential Restart of Malta Citizenship by Residency and Change to “Granting of Citizenship for Exceptional Services (Amendment) Regulations, 2025”

October 23, 2025

Federal Rule Requires Airlines to Disregard “X” Sex Marker on U.S. Passports and Designate Passenger as “Male” or “Female” for International Flights

October 21, 2025

Updates Regarding Presidential Proclamation Impacting H-1B Workers: Latest USCIS Guidance

October 20, 2025

Portugal Residence Permit Appointment Delays Creating Operational and Travel Challenges

October 16, 2025

Critical Compliance Update: UK Restrictions on Sponsor Cost Recovery from Skilled Workers

October 9, 2025

Critical Update to Canadian LMIA Advertising Requirements: What Global Mobility Practitioners Need to Know

October 8, 2025

USCIS Changes Naturalization Civics Test, Reverts to Prior Question Bank

October 2, 2025

Reminder: EU Entry/Exit System (EES) Scheduled to Launch on October 12, 2025

October 1, 2025

Immigration Impacts of the Federal Government Shutdown

September 26, 2025

Updates Regarding Presidential Proclamation Impacting H-1B Workers: One Week Later

September 20, 2025

Breaking News: USCIS and CBP Provide Clarification on Travel Restrictions for H-1B Workers

September 9, 2025

U.S. Department of State Restricts Third-Country Processing of Nonimmigrant Visas

July 24, 2025

European Union: Entry/Exit System (EES) and European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) Update

July 21, 2025

United Kingdom: Immigration Rule Changes

June 11, 2025

Social Security Administration Pauses Mailing of SSNs for Immigration-Based Applications

June 5, 2025

Trump Administration Announces Travel Ban for 12 Countries, Restrictions for 7 Countries

May 29, 2025

International Summer Travel: Key Considerations For Foreign Nationals, Green Card Holders, and U.S. Citizens

May 22, 2025

USCIS Updates I-9 Handbook to Reflect Extended Cap-Gap Extension for F-1 Students

May 16, 2025

United Kingdom Government Announces Immigration Restrictions in White Paper

May 15, 2025

Malta Citizenship by Investment on Pause Due to European Court of Justice Ruling

April 3, 2025

How to Prepare for a Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) Immigration Workplace Visit

March 19, 2025

Tentative List of Countries for Potential Travel Ban and Travel Restrictions

March 14, 2025

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services and Department of Homeland Security to Collect Social Media Identifiers on Immigration Forms

March 13, 2025

New DHS Rule Amends Alien Registration Requirements Effective April 11, 2025; Implications for Canadian Nationals

March 11, 2025

State Department Ban on Visas for Transgender Athletes: Policy and Implications for Sports in the U.S.

March 10, 2025

Preparing for Possible Travel Bans and Consular Closures

March 6, 2025

DOJ Memo Signals Aggressive Immigration Enforcement with Implications for Employers and Noncitizens

March 6, 2025

New Zealand Government Updates Its Investor Visa Program

March 5, 2025

U.S. Department of State Updates Interview Waiver Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Visa Applications at U.S. Consulates and Embassies

March 4, 2025

New Immigration Registration Process Imposes Requirements on Child Visa Holders on their 14th Birthday

February 25, 2025

New Gender Rules for U.S. Passports

February 24, 2025

USCIS Pauses Adjudication on all Immigration Applications for Certain Parolees

February 14, 2025

Noncitizens Must Carry Proof of U.S. Immigration Status FAQs for Employers and Employees

February 7, 2025

USCIS No Longer Required to Adjudicate Dependent and Principal Applications Together - Considerations for H-4 EAD Holders and Their Employers

January 31, 2025

Changes Ahead for PERM/Labor Certification in New Jersey

January 27, 2025

Suspension of Visa Issuance at U.S. Embassy in Colombia

January 24, 2025

Preparing for the Fiscal Year 2026 H-1B Cap Season

December 11, 2024

Breaking News: U.S. Department of State Removes Over 30 Countries from the J-1 Exchange Visitor Skills List

November 7, 2024

Business Immigration Update: Planning for the Second Trump Administration

October 22, 2024

UK Home Office Confirms Expansion of Government Rollout of the UK's Electronic Travel Authorization System

By Maria Fernanda Gandarez and Mary Connelly

October 18, 2024

European Entry/Exit System Update

October 16, 2024

European Union Introducing New Travel Requirements in 2025

August 28, 2024

Update: New Parole in Place Program for Spouses and Stepchildren of U.S. Citizens Halted by Federal Court

By Praveena Nallainathan and Avram Morell

April 17, 2024

Important Upcoming Change to Visits to the UK

April 12, 2024

Update: Brazil Postpones Visa Requirements for United States, Canadian, and Australian Citizens to April 10, 2025

April 1, 2024

Passports From Several Countries Do Not Require Visas to China for Stays of 15 Days or Less Until November 30, 2024

March 28, 2024

U.S., Canadian, and Australian Citizens Require Visas for Brazil for Tourism, Business, and Cruise Travel Starting April 10, 2024

February 5, 2024

Increased USCIS Filing Fees Go Into Effect April 1, 2024

February 1, 2024

FY2025 H-1B Lottery Registration Opens March 6, 2024

January 16, 2024

Domestic Visa Renewal Pilot Program to Launch in January 2024

October 20, 2023

October 2023 Immigration Updates

July 17, 2023

Important Immigration Compliance Updates and International Travel Reminders for Foreign Nationals

May 8, 2023

Important I-9 Updates for May 2023

April 20, 2023

Portugal to End Golden Visa Program – Allowing Applicants Until New Law Enacted

October 14, 2022

Yet Again, DHS Extends I-9 Flexibilities Related to COVID-19; Current I-9 Form Version

August 23, 2022

USCIS Reaches FY2023 H-1B Cap

July 22, 2022

Gandarez and Meddin Write About Updates to Electronic EU Border Controls
Law360

May 13, 2022

Changes in European Travel: Introducing a New Visa Waiver Program

May 12, 2022

Upcoming and Proposed Changes to the Schengen Visa and Travel System

April 13, 2022

I-94 Records Now Serve as Proof of Work Authorization for Certain Nonimmigrant Spouses

April 11, 2022

USCIS Implements Risk-Based Approach for Conditional Permanent Resident Interviews

February 10, 2022

H-1B Lottery Registration Opens March 1

February 4, 2022

Labor & Immigration Implications of New Australia/United Kingdom Free Trade Agreement: What to Expect

November 15, 2021

Historic USCIS Settlement Agreement Reached to Ease Certain H-4 and L-2 Work Permit Processes and USCIS Expands to E Spouses

October 27, 2021

White House Advances Safe Resumption of Global Travel During COVID-19

October 18, 2021

Biden Administration to Lift COVID-19 Travel Bans for Fully Vaccinated Foreign Nationals

July 7, 2021

Consular National Interest Exceptions to the COVID-19 Travel Ban to Remain Valid for 12 Months and for Multiple Entries

U.S. Imposes Ban On Travelers From India

April 2, 2021

Expiration of Presidential Proclamation Banning Certain H-1B, H-2B, J-1, and L-1 Nonimmigrant Applicants

March 4, 2021

State Department Rescinds Travel Ban Exceptions for Many Travelers from the European Schengen Area, UK, and Ireland

January 15, 2021

6 Priorities For Employment-Based Immigration Reform

Published in Law360

June 23, 2020

Trump Issues Executive Order Suspending New Work Visas for Several Employment-based Categories Through End of 2020

May 18, 2020

ICE Extends Flexibility in I-9 Compliance Requirements in Response to COVID-19

April 23, 2020

The Six Key Takeaways from the President's Executive Order on Immigration

March 31, 2020

USCIS Announces Temporary Suspension of Premium Processing for All I-129 and I-140 Petitions

March 30, 2020

DHS Issues Special Guidance Regarding Requirements Associated With Form I-9

March 18, 2020

Update to Coronavirus Impact on Global Mobility

December 10, 2019

H-1B Cap – Electronic Registration Process

November 25, 2019

Changes to U.S. Visa Validity for French Citizens

November 19, 2019

Plan Early for International Holiday Travel

November 7, 2019

Premium Processing Fee to Increase on December 2

August 28, 2019

Form I-9 Valid Beyond Current August 31, 2019 Expiry Date

March 14, 2019

USCIS Implements Biometrics and Additional Requirements for Form to Extend/Change Status

March 13, 2019

Premium Processing Now Available for H-1B Petitions

January 31, 2019

Department of Homeland Security Announces Final Rule Amending Regulations for H-1B Cap

December 7, 2018

Plan Early for International Holiday Travel

December 3, 2018

Department of Homeland Security Announces Proposal for H-1B Cap Pre-Registration System

October 22, 2018

Proposed Pre-Registration Rule for H-1B Cap Lottery

August 30, 2018

USCIS Extends and Expands Suspension of Premium Processing for H-1B Petitions

April 13, 2018

USCIS Announces Number of H-1B Petitions Filed for Fiscal Year 2019 Cap

March 21, 2018

Premium Processing Suspended for H-1B Cap Cases