To amend section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to reduce the waiting period for employment authorization for asylum applicants, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself and Mr. MERKLEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to reduce the waiting period for employment authorization for asylum applicants, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Assisting Seekers in Pursuit of Integration and Rapid Employment Act” or the “ASPIRE Act”.

SEC. 2. EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION FOR ALIENS SEEKING ASYLUM.

Paragraph (2) of section 208(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1158(d)) is amended to read as follows:

“(2) EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION.—

“(A) ELIGIBILITY.—Subject to subparagraphs (B) and (C), the Secretary of Homeland Security shall authorize employment for an applicant for asylum whose application for asylum has not been determined frivolous.

“(B) APPLICATION.—An applicant for asylum who is not otherwise eligible for employment authorization shall not be granted such authorization prior to 30 days after the date of filing of the application for asylum.

“(C) TERM.—Employment authorization for an applicant for asylum shall be valid until the date on which an applicant is issued a final denial of the applicable application, including administrative and judicial review.”.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Director of U.S. Citizenship and
Immigration Services to increase the capacity of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to address the asylum backlog, including by hiring additional asylum officers and providing basic asylum training and translation and interpretation services, $2,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2024, to remain available until expended.

(2) USE OF FUNDS.—Not less than 75 percent of the amount authorized to be appropriated under paragraph (1) shall be used to hire personnel.

(b) DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Homeland Security for the Shelter and Services Program, administered jointly by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to provide State and local governments and nonprofit organizations with funding for the provision of shelter, food, transportation, and other support services to migrants encountered by the Secretary $10,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2024, to remain available until expended.