



Mercedes Badia-Tavas possesses the knowledge, dedication and industry proven resourcefulness to benefit her clients – Fortune 500 and small companies alike – and their employees on a broad range of cases. With over 30 years’ experience exclusively in immigration law, including nine years managing her own firm, Mercedes counsels and represents with regard to immigration employment visas, permanent residency and government compliance.

Mercedes offers tailored legal and business guidance to executives, managers and critical employees for entities of all sizes, even businesses with global operations, and to physicians, professors and scientists at universities and research institutions. She also works with accomplished artists, performers and athletes to meet extraordinary ability and exceptional standards for both temporary and permanent visas. In addition, she advises on I-9 compliance, audits, investigations, training, and policies, as well as due diligence for mergers and acquisitions, transactions as a successor, and internal immigration program administration for practical implementation.

An immigrant herself, coming to the states as a child from Cuba, Mercedes finds particular fulfillment in helping companies and individuals immigrate to the United States – seeking their “American dream” – through startups and business transactions that benefit the U.S. economy and workforce. Engendered with a tenacity, commitment and cultural sensibility allows Mercedes to effectively understand and decipher complex issues with immigration to address her clients’ needs, because of learnings from her own experiences immigrating and studying in Europe and Latin America.

Bilingual in Spanish and English, Mercedes has sincere compassion for and sensitivity to her clients, keenly aware of the legal land mines and tedious pathways they have to navigate through the U.S. immigration system. Whether advising on an immigration matter for an individual relocating from abroad, transferring within the U.S. from another employer, entering the U.S. workforce from student status, looking to build a U.S. business or someone part of a cultural exchange program, she strives to

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EDUCATION

Tulane University School of Law, (J.D.),
1993

Agnes Scott College, (B.A.), Economics
and Spanish, 1986

BAR ADMISSIONS

Illinois

COURT ADMISSIONS

U.S. District Court for the Northern
District of Illinois

LANGUAGES

English

French

Spanish

PRACTICES

Emerging Companies and Venture
Capital

European Services

Greater China and South East Asia

Immigration and Global Mobility Services

Immigration Pathfinder Program

International Services

Japanese Services

stay in-tune with the challenges these issues bring.

Alongside a team of equally experienced colleagues, Mercedes prepares employment-based immigration petitions (B, H, L, O, P, TN, E), PERM labor certification applications, EB-1 Extraordinary Ability, EB-1 Outstanding Researcher/Professor, EB-2 National Interest Waiver, EB-5 Investor, and subsequent adjustment of status and consular processing and naturalization cases. She helps clients navigate the complex and changing issues surrounding the national interest exceptions (NIE) to health care travel bans over the Schengen Area, the UK and Ireland under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) guidance memo on critical infrastructure. She also manages global immigration matters for clients transferring personnel to overseas assignments through a network of local counsel.

In the arts, Mercedes has successfully secured O-1 and P-1 visas for an Oscar-winning producer and actors, champion racecar drivers, and major visual artists, along with their support staff. For entrepreneurs in a variety of industries from tech start-ups to global companies and investors from Australia, China, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, and South America, to name a few, she has assisted with establishing their business and in transferring key personal for temporary or permanent relocation.

In the global mobility area, she works with local immigration counsel to secure entry visas and work permits for U.S. transferees to Australia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, among others.

At every possible turn, Mercedes uses her legal skills with technical accuracy to represent, advocate, lobby and litigate when necessary.

Mercedes' approach is to use quality documentation in an organized method to manage expectations and costs for clients. She and her team are committed to utilize systems-driven tracking, provide timely updates and follow-up, and to be pragmatic when unexpected issues arise.

Notably, Mercedes has been featured on National Public Radio (NPR) and Spanish-language broadcasts on immigration topics, many of which included audience call-ins. When the first travel ban occurred in the U.S. in 2017, she appeared at O'Hare International Airport to assist travelers and has since been sought out by media sources, across the country, for her commentary on immigration issues, including COVID-19 related policy changes and legislation and subsequent travel bans.

Mercedes is not regularly admitted to practice law in the local courts of the District of Columbia and is working under the supervision of a member of the D.C. Bar pending her admission.

Professional and Community Involvement

Executive board member and past chair, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) Chicago Chapter

Member, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)
Congressional Advocacy

Member, Department of State and Customs and Border Protection

Labor and Employment

Logistics and Transportation

Workplace Culture 2.0

INDUSTRIES

Colleges and Universities

Education

Federal Contracting, Procurement and
National Security

government liaison committees

Member, American Bar Association International Section

Member, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois

Member, UNO Metropolitan Leadership Institute of Chicago

Sponsor, Professional Women's Club of Chicago (PWCC)

Member, Barnes & Thornburg Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee,
Chicago Office

Member, Lake Forest College Board of Trustees, August, 2021

Honors

The Best Lawyers in America, 2016-2024

Chicago's Notable Minority Lawyers, Crain's Chicago Business, 2018