

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 27, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear President Biden and Secretary Mayorkas:

We write to thank you for your administration's commitment to utilizing the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program to protect vulnerable populations who are unsafe in their home countries due to violence or disaster. In particular, we welcome your recent actions to grant TPS for Venezuela and for Burma and to issue a new designation for Haiti. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in consultation with the U.S. State Department and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), conduct an immediate review of at least 17 countries to determine their eligibility to be designated or redesignated for TPS, including: the Bahamas, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen. Reports indicate that conditions in each of these countries satisfy one or more conditions of TPS under 8 U.S.C. § 1254a.

As you know, Congress created TPS in 1990, delegating authority to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to initiate a temporary, blanket protection for nationals of a country who would face life-threatening conditions if returned. There is no numerical limit on the number of people who can hold TPS; rather, it is meant to provide relief to all those who cannot and should not be returned to dangerous conditions. Unfortunately, the most recent administration failed to use TPS to respond to adverse developments in foreign states.

We welcome your vision of establishing a fair, humane, and functional immigration system that protects those in need of refuge and promotes stability for Americans. We are fully supportive of your legislative proposals toward that aim, including the U.S. Citizenship Act, and thankful to see an expedited pathway to citizenship for TPS holders included. The full, expansive use of TPS designations, which is both in line with Congressional intent and the letter of the law, is a critical tool that can be used now to advance that long-term vision.

First, TPS has long served to provide a safe haven in instances where a person is not eligible for refugee status but remains in need of protection from dangerous conditions. This is an essential


concurrent asset as you do the work of rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) following the devastation it has undergone in the past four years. At the same time, redesignations are essential to keeping U.S. citizen children together with their parents, in line with your administration's emphasis on protecting family unity.


The strategic use of TPS is also important to your stated aim of addressing the root causes of forced migration. A critical prong of addressing violence, instability, and lack of opportunity includes protecting foreign nationals currently living in the United States from being deported to these conditions, stretching those countries' already-strained capacity to receive them. TPS holders also provide billions of dollars in "unofficial foreign aid" from the United States to their home countries through remittances, lending support to their loved ones to endure the very conditions that make it unsafe for them to return.¹

Finally, the TPS program serves domestic economic interests. As you know, the program provides recipients permission to work in addition to protection from deportation. TPS holders contribute roughly \$2.3 billion in federal taxes and \$1.3 billion in state and local taxes each year. They hold an estimated \$10.1 billion in annual spending power. Their employers contribute millions into Social Security and Medicare, helping to keep these programs running and solvent. For the past year, many TPS holders have worked in essential industries to keep our country fed, safe, healthy, and clean during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 5, 2021, over 310 state, local, and national immigrant, labor, faith, civil rights, and legal organizations wrote a letter urging your administration to review nearly all of the countries listed above (as consideration for Ethiopia was added after the letter's publication, the organizations do not have a stated position on TPS for Ethiopia at this time). We join them in respectfully requesting the immediate review of country conditions and the appropriate designations for the above countries, in keeping with your commitment to supporting immigrant communities and a functioning and humane immigration system. It will take time to address the shortcomings of our current system. In the meantime, TPS extends needed humanitarian protections and keeps families together. We thank you for your consideration and attention to this timely issue and greatly appreciate your continued support for the TPS program.

Sincerely,


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

¹ For example, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras are three of the top ten receiving countries of remittances from the United States, with individuals sending home an estimated \$8.49 billion, \$4.87 billion, and \$4.06 billion respectively from 2010-2018. See Martin A. Weiss, Remittances: Background and Issues for Congress 6, Congressional Research Service, R43217, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43217.pdf>.

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

/s/

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/

Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/

Patty Murray
United States Senator

/s/

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

/s/

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

/s/

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/

Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

/s/

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

/s/

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

/s/

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/

David Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

/s/

Val Demings
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

/s/

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

/s/

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/

Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

/s/

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

/s/

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/

Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

/s/

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

/s/

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress