

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Elaine C. Duke  
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Tillerson and Acting Secretary Duke:

We write to urge you to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for Honduras and El Salvador, which are due to expire in January and March of next year, respectively.

Currently, approximately 200,000 Salvadorans and approximately 61,000 Hondurans live and work lawfully in the United States as recipients of TPS. These individuals are registered with DHS with biometric data on file. TPS beneficiaries are making valuable contributions to the U.S. economy, with labor force participation rates of 81 percent for Salvadorans age 16 and older and 85 percent for Hondurans age 16 and older.<sup>[1]</sup> Beneficiaries contribute over \$648 million dollars annually to Social Security and Medicare.<sup>[2]</sup> Additionally, Salvadoran and Honduran beneficiaries, who are legally-sanctioned workers, provide important support to the U.S. construction industry,<sup>[3]</sup> and these hard-working individuals will be essential contributors to the rebuilding efforts after Hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

In considering the extension of TPS designations for El Salvador and Honduras, we encourage you to consider the unique conditions in each country which provide a clear basis for TPS extension in accordance with the law. In El Salvador and Honduras, acute crises initially posed by natural disasters have had lasting effects, which have been exacerbated by subsequent environmental, economic, and security challenges. Efforts continue to rebuild infrastructure and provide dependable services to these populations, but these efforts are hampered by limited resources and high levels of violence and insecurity. Both countries suffer from some of the

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<sup>[1]</sup> Robert Warren and Donald Kerwin, Ctr. for Migration Studies *A Statistical and Demographic Profile of the US TPS Populations from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti*, 5 *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 577, 582 Tbl. 2 (2017) (citing U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

<sup>[2]</sup> Amanda Baran et al., Immigrant Legal Resource Center, *Economic Contributions by Salvadoran, Honduran, and Haitian TPS Holders*, April 2017, at 7 Tbl. 4e (citing American Community Service data).

<sup>[3]</sup> Zuzana Jerabek, National Immigration Forum, *Fact Sheet: Temporary Protected Status*, July 11, 2017 at 3 (citing Cecilia Menjivar, Center for Migration Research, The University of Kansas, *Temporary Protected Status in the United States: The Experiences of Honduran and Salvadoran Immigrants*, May 2017, at 14 Tbl. 2).

highest rates of homicides and sexual violence in the world. In 2016, the people of El Salvador were victims of over 5,200 homicides, an alarming rate of more than 80 per 100,000 people and the highest globally. In the case of Honduras, the high prevalence of violent crimes is further complicated by weak rule of law and the fact that some 95 percent of criminal offenses end in impunity.

These troubling security statistics are compounded by the fact that 66 percent of the Honduran population and 31 percent of the Salvadoran population live below the poverty line, according to the most recent World Bank data. Moreover, in 2016, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported that due to a historic drought in the region, some 1.5 million people in Honduras and El Salvador are in need of humanitarian assistance. Clearly, neither country has the capacity and resources at this time to safely absorb the return of the tens of thousands of their nationals who are currently in the United States under TPS.

Finally, it is important to consider the full range of consequences if the TPS designation for El Salvador and Honduras is not extended. In the United States, we would lose tens of thousands of productive members of our labor force who contribute to our economic growth, pay their share of taxes, and make valuable contributions to key sectors of the U.S. economy. Countless families in El Salvador and Honduras would lose the economic lifeline they depend on through remittances from relatives working legally in the United States. The return of more than 250,000 individuals to Honduras and El Salvador would also have destabilizing consequences, straining recovery efforts and exacerbating existing challenges to achieving sustained economic growth and development.

Since 2014, the U.S. Government has greatly expanded its engagement with the Northern Triangle of Central America, in which El Salvador and Honduras are located, in order to address the underlying factors driving irregular immigration in the region. At a time when the U.S. is making our own investments to support security, stability and prosperity in Central America through foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement, a decision to not renew the TPS designation for these two countries would undercut the very strategic objectives we seek to achieve in Central America.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



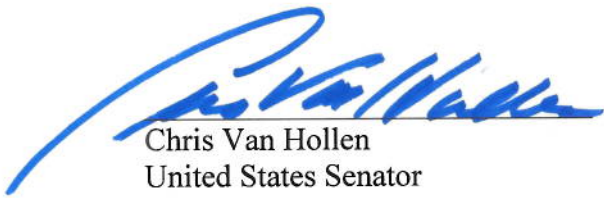
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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

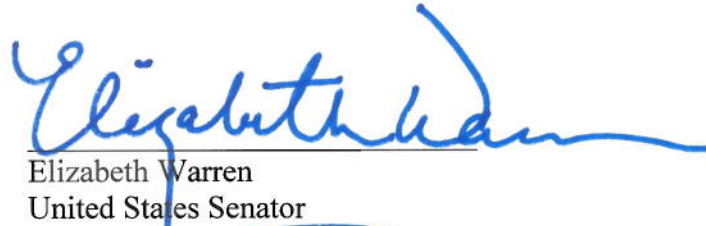


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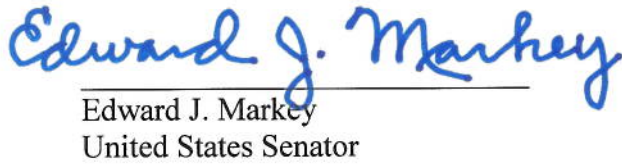
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



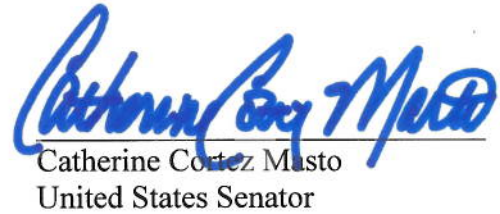
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



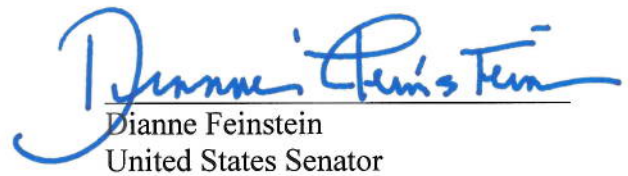
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



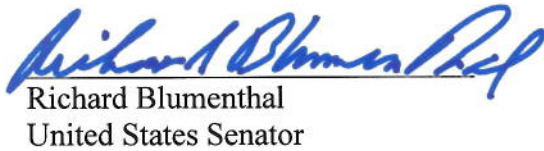
Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



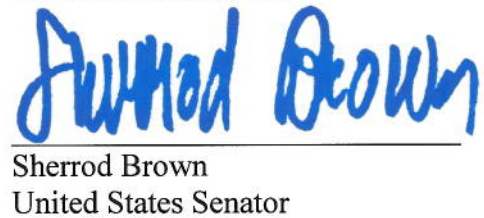
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



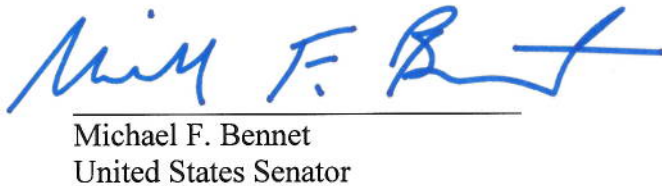
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



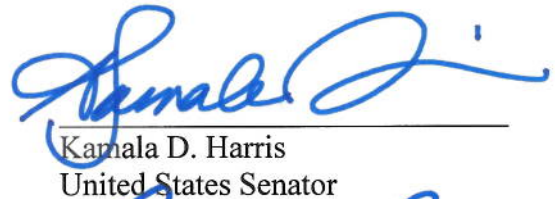
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



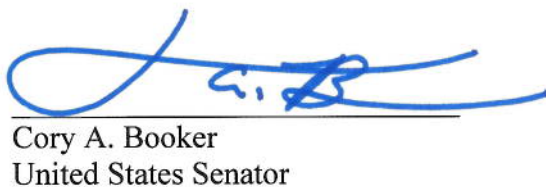
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



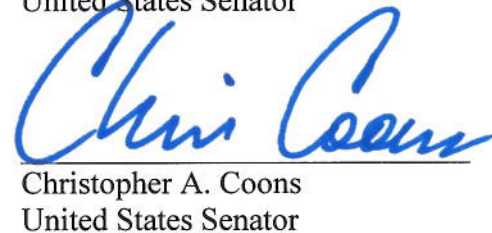
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



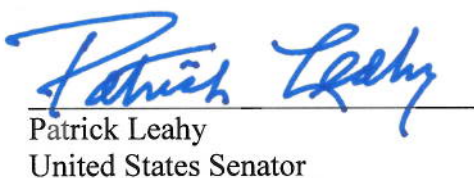
Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



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Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator