



## CITIES for ACTION

August 31, 2021

### VIA EMAIL

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Vice President Kamala Harris  
The White House  
Office of the Vice President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

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

Secretary Antony Blinken  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken:

We write to thank you for your administration's vision of a fair, functional, and humane immigration system in the United States. In line with that vision, we, the undersigned mayors, respectfully request that you conduct an immediate review of at least the following 15 countries for eligibility to designate or redesignate for Temporary Protected Status (TPS): Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> the Bahamas, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Sudan.

As local government leaders of diverse communities, we commend the administration's decisions to issue new TPS designations for Burma, Haiti,<sup>2</sup> Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen, and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Hong Kong. These decisions have the potential to aid more than 400,000 immigrants living throughout the United States.<sup>3</sup> Ongoing civil, political, and humanitarian crises are not limited to those countries, however, and other immigrants in the U.S. require this same protection. In fact, there are approximately 2 million immigrants currently present who could potentially benefit if these additional 15 countries were designated for TPS.<sup>4</sup> While some of these

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<sup>1</sup> Given the current volatile situation in Afghanistan, the undersigned urge the Administration to protect our Afghan communities in the U.S. A TPS designation would be in line with the UNHCR's recommendation that states refrain from removing any Afghan nationals back to the country during this crisis. See UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, *UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan* (Aug. 2021), <https://bit.ly/3sZqipn>.

<sup>2</sup> The undersigned commend the administration on its decision to update the "continuous presence" eligibility date for the Haiti designation to July 29, 2021 in light of the upheaval caused by the assassination of President Moïse last month. Given the magnitude-7.2 earthquake in Haiti on August 14<sup>th</sup> that has resulted in severe damage and an ever-increasing death toll, we urge the administration to update the "continuous presence" date to August 14, 2021 in response to this tragedy.

<sup>3</sup> CATHOLIC LEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK, *How Many Could Executive Action Protect? Estimating the Scope of Protection Through TPS and DACA 2-4*, (2020), <https://bit.ly/3Dx9Scz>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; TEMP. PROTECTED STATUS ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP, *List of Countries with Conditions that Satisfy Grounds for TPS*, <https://bit.ly/2WIg8xm> (last updated August 17, 2021).

countries have been designated for TPS in the past, now more than ever, it is vital that TPS be *redesignated*—rather than extending a prior designation—so that a greater number of our residents will be eligible for this much-needed relief.

As you know, in recent years, climate catastrophes have caused significant and long-lasting damage to numerous countries, leaving entire communities struggling to rebuild. Further, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, countries throughout the world are facing severe social and economic emergencies, exacerbating a variety of challenging conditions previously wrought by natural disasters, extreme political unrest, armed conflicts, and other crises. These extraordinary conditions have increased the number of immigrants living in our communities who need the vital humanitarian relief that TPS provides: allowing recipients to live safely and securely, keeping families together, and providing the opportunity to work, leading to increased economic stability.

Besides offering relief to countless immigrant families who are integral to our communities, TPS designations can also aid our nation's own pandemic recovery. At risk to their own health and in spite of uncertainty, current TPS holders and other immigrants have worked to ensure access to essential services that keep the economy moving.<sup>5</sup> Immigrants have a significant presence in vital sectors including healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. They fill crucial gaps in the workforce, creating greater economic activity and productivity, which is helping our communities grow and strengthen as we Build Back Better.<sup>6</sup> TPS will be key to this continued growth as it ensures that our immigrant residents feel secure in their ability to work and to continue living together with their families.

Moreover, TPS is a powerful tool in working towards racial justice in our communities. We commend your administration's commitment to advancing racial equity in the United States,<sup>7</sup> and urge you to examine the ways in which TPS designations could address some of our current immigration system's racially inequitable outcomes. Immigrants of color are disproportionately detained, receive higher bond costs, face racist treatment within detention centers, and are more likely to be subject to deportation.<sup>8</sup> As a result, immigrants of color are often hesitant to utilize public benefits for which they are eligible or even to seek out immigration legal services, out of fear that doing so could lead to negative immigration consequences. TPS would begin to improve these disparities by the sheer fact that it would protect holders from detention and deportation.

As local government leaders, it is our responsibility to make sure that all of our residents, regardless of immigration status, feel safe and supported; and TPS—with its ability to protect holders from deportation and to provide economic stability—would go a long way toward ensuring that reality. The global climate crisis coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic requires swift action to protect immigrants, their families, and the local communities in which they reside and contribute. We welcome the vision described in your proposed legislation to reform our immigration system and look forward

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<sup>5</sup> Nicole Prchal Svajlenka & Tom Jawetz, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, *A Demographic Profile of TPS Holders Providing Essential Services During the Coronavirus Crisis* (2020), <https://ampr.gs/3DuRfWG>.

<sup>6</sup> FWD.US, *Immigrant Essential Workers are Crucial to America's COVID-19 Recovery* (2020), <https://bit.ly/3gPFLDA>.

<sup>7</sup> Exec. Order No. 13,985, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 (Jan. 20, 2021).

<sup>8</sup> See generally, BLACK ALLIANCE FOR JUST IMMIGRATION, *The State of Black Immigrants Part II: Black Immigrants in the Mass Criminalization System* 15 (2015), <https://bit.ly/2WGbw17> (noting that “Black people are far more likely than any other population to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned in the U.S. criminal enforcement system—the system upon which immigration enforcement increasingly relies.”).

to working alongside you to see necessary change enacted, but it will take time to address the shortcomings of the current system. In the meantime, TPS extends needed humanitarian protections and keeps families together. It is critical that you act rapidly to provide that protection to millions of immigrants living in communities throughout the United States by designating or redesignating TPS for these 15 countries. We thank you for your consideration and attention to this time sensitive, vital issue, and we greatly appreciate your continued support for the TPS program.

Sincerely,

***Bill de Blasio**, Mayor, New York, NY*

***Kim Janey**, Mayor, Boston, MA*

***Randall Woodfin**, Mayor, Birmingham, AL*

***Regina Romero**, Mayor, Tucson, AZ*

***Jesse Arreguin**, Mayor, Berkeley, CA*

***Libby Schaaf**, Mayor, Oakland, CA*

***Tom Butt**, Mayor, Richmond, CA*

***Darrell Steinberg**, Mayor, Sacramento, CA*

***Todd Gloria**, Mayor, San Diego, CA*

***Muriel Bowser**, Mayor, Washington, DC*

***Michael J. Ryan**, Mayor, Sunrise, FL*

***Keisha Lance Bottoms**, Mayor, Atlanta, GA*

***Lori E. Lightfoot**, Mayor, Chicago, IL*

***Sumbul Siddiqui**, Mayor, Cambridge, MA*

***Yvonne M. Spicer**, Mayor, Framingham, MA*

***Joseph A. Curtatone**, Mayor, Somerville, MA*

***Patrick Wojahn**, Mayor, College Park, MD*

***Celina Benitez**, Mayor, Mount Rainier, MD*

***Jeffrey Slavin**, Mayor, Somerset, MD*

***Jessy Gregg**, Mayor, East Lansing, MI*

***Jacob Frey**, Mayor, Minneapolis, MN*

***Lydia Lavelle**, Mayor, Carrboro, NC*

***Pam Hemminger**, Mayor, Chapel Hill, NC*

***Tim Keller**, Mayor, Albuquerque, NM*

***Kathy Sheehan**, Mayor, Albany, NY*

***Byron W. Brown**, Mayor, Buffalo, NY*

***James F. Kenney**, Mayor, Philadelphia, PA*

***Maria Rivera**, Mayor, Central Falls, RI*

***Jenny A. Durkan**, Mayor, Seattle, WA*

***Victoria R. Woodards**, Mayor, Tacoma, WA*