

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable John Sullivan
Acting Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

2018 APR 25 PM 2:07

SCANNED/RECEIVED
BY ESR/SGO

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Acting Secretary Sullivan:

We write to urge you to extend the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Honduras, which is set to expire on July 5, 2018. Since its inception, TPS has permitted the United States to offer humanitarian protection to foreign nationals who are unable to return to the dire conditions in their homeland.

In considering the extension of TPS designation for Honduras, we encourage you to consider the unique conditions in the country, which provide a clear basis for TPS extension in accordance with the law. Although TPS was initially made available for Hondurans after Hurricane Mitch ravaged the country in 1998, successive Republican and Democratic administrations have considered its lasting effects as well as subsequent security challenges.

In 2016, the people of Honduras were victims of 5,150 murders, a rate of approximately 59 murders per 100,000 people – one of the highest in the world.¹ In addition, Honduras has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world,² and according to the Center for Women's Rights, a woman was murdered every 14 hours in 2012.³ Hondurans face threats from street gangs, which are widespread and prey on small businesses and families through extortion. Endemic corruption and weak rule of law fuel impunity and exacerbate the security challenges. Beyond the epidemic levels of violence, more than two thirds of the Honduran population live in poverty and, in rural areas, 20 percent of Hondurans live on less than \$2 a day.⁴

Ending TPS for Hondurans would force more than 86,031 individuals to go back to a country with severe security challenges. We are also concerned that the Honduran government lacks the capacity to facilitate their return, which would make it difficult to ensure their protection. More importantly, we are extremely concerned about the more than 53,500⁵ U.S. born children who would have to accompany their TPS beneficiary parents and who would be vulnerable to recruitment by gangs in Honduras.

In recent years, the United States has increased cooperation with Central American governments, including the Honduran government, in order to address the underlying factors driving migration in the region. Through foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement, the United States has made significant investments to support security, economic development and stability in Central

¹ <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=21167>

² <http://abcnews.go.com/International/men-women-honduras-inside-dangerous-places-earth-woman/story?id=47135328>

³ <http://derechosdelamujer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Observatorio-Violencia-contra-las-mujeres-hondurenas.pdf>

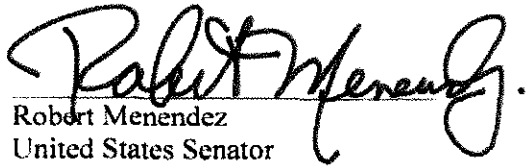
⁴ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>

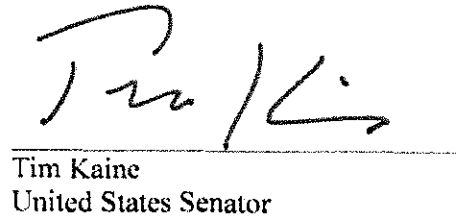
⁵ https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2017/10/19125633/101717_TPSFactsheet-USA.pdf

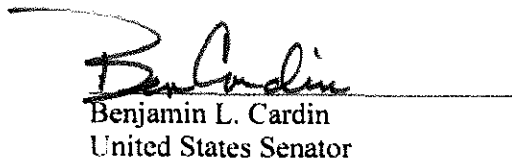
America. A decision to end TPS designation for Honduras would threaten the very stability we seek to achieve in Central America and would undermine our foreign policy objectives there.

In closing, we urge you to consider the critical conditions in Honduras and the destabilizing effects that terminating this TPS designation would entail. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We look forward to your response.

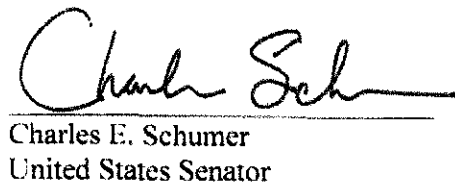
Sincerely,

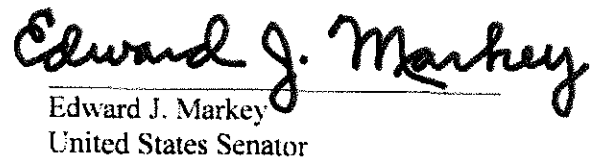

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

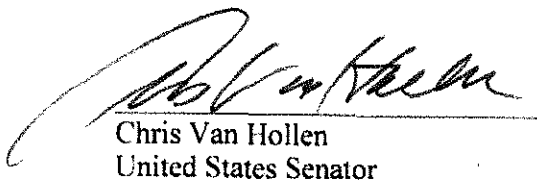

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

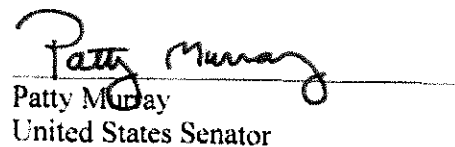

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

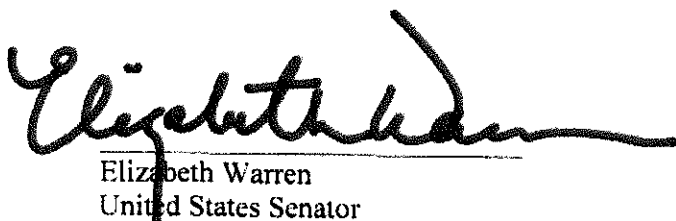

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

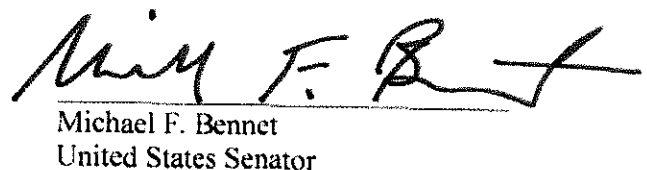

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

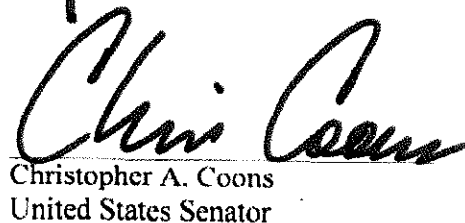

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

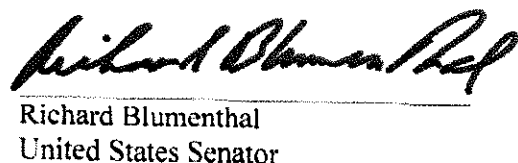

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Patty Murray
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

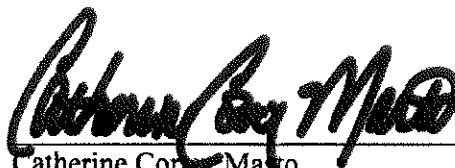

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator


Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Catherine Corrine Mastro
United States Senator



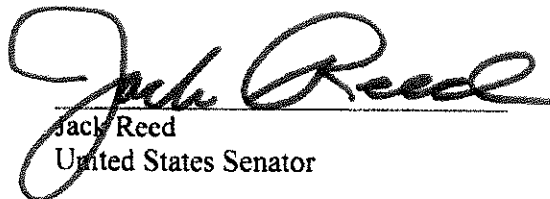
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



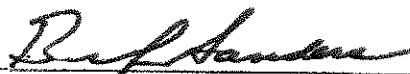
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Maize Hirono
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



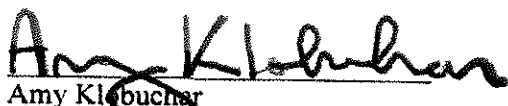
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

May 10, 2018

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Unites States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Menendez:

Thank you for your April 25, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

I appreciate your interest in the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Honduras. The Secretary of Homeland Security's authority to designate a country for TPS and to extend or terminate a country's existing designation is based upon specific statutory criteria. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 244(b). U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on TPS issues and implementing the program.

At least 60 days before the current expiration date for a TPS designation, the Secretary must review conditions in the foreign country and, after consultation with other appropriate federal agencies, determine whether the statutory conditions for TPS continue to be met. Under the INA, if the Secretary determines that the conditions for designation are no longer met with respect to a country, the Secretary is required to terminate the designation. *See* INA § 244(b)(1),(3).

Secretary Nielsen decided to terminate the TPS designation for Honduras after considering information from appropriate U.S. Government agencies, with a delay of 18 months to allow for an orderly transition before the termination becomes effective on January 5, 2020. DHS is committed to an orderly transition that will allow time for Honduras to prepare for the return and reintegration of its citizens. Additional details on the Secretary's decision and the process for current Honduran TPS beneficiaries to re-register for TPS and renew their work authorization until TPS terminates on January 5, 2020 can be found on the USCIS website and in a notice that will be published in the *Federal Register*.

Thank you again for you letter and for your interest in this important matter. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna
Director