

April 22, 2020

Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Kenneth T. Cuccinelli
Senior Official Performing Duties of the Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Extending TPS Re-Registration Period for Somalia and Yemen in Light of COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Senior Official Cuccinelli:

On behalf of the 69 undersigned national, state, and local organizations in the areas of immigration, health, civil rights, human rights, labor, faith, and education, we write to respectfully request that, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): **(a) automatically extend work authorization and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for all current Yemen and Somalia TPS holders; or (b) at the very least, extend the re-registration periods for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders from Somalia and Yemen for a total of 180 days.** While states across the country are rightfully taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, these measures and the subsequent loss of income and freedom of movement establish insurmountable barriers for TPS holders to renew their status before the rapidly approaching re-registration deadline. TPS holders should not have to choose between missing a deadline and violating health directives that keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe.

The re-registration periods for Yemeni and Somali TPS coincide closely with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. During this time states and localities instructed 95 percent of our country, 316 million people, to shelter in place,¹ orders coinciding with unprecedented loss of jobs and investments nationwide. On March 18, 2020, USCIS closed its offices and instituted telework procedures for adjudicators, likely contributing to slower processing times moving forward. As service providers, we also face barriers to serving TPS holders, as employees must telework far from technology, case files, office supplies, and physical access to clients. These barriers make it increasingly likely that Somali and Yemeni TPS holders will be prevented or significantly delayed from re-registering on time and maintaining their work permits and protection from deportation. Finally, if TPS holders or their families members contract COVID-19 they may be physically unable to prepare their re-registration application in a timely manner.

¹ Sarah Mervosh et. al, *See Which States and Cities Have Told Residents to Stay at Home*, New York Times, April 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-stay-at-home-order.html>.

Thank you for considering this request. We respectfully request a response to this letter and you may contact Jill Marie Bussey at jbussey@cliniclegal.org (240) 353-5208 to share your response or with questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

National

African Communities Together
Alianza Americas
America's Voice
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Immigration Lawyers Association
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Church World Service
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Families Belong Together
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom to Thrive
HIAS
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
International Refugee Assistance Project
Japanese American Citizens League
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National TPS Alliance
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Northeastern University School of Law
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
Oxfam America
Poder Latinx
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas--Justice Team
South Asian Americans Leading Together
The Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Union for Reform Judaism
United We Dream
Win Without War

State and Local

Adhikaar
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC)
Ascentria Care Alliance Immigration Legal Assistance Program
Boston University School of Law Immigrants' Rights & Human Trafficking Program
CAIR-Minnesota
Canopy NWA
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
Central American Resource Center
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Comité TPS Massachusetts
DeNovo
End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin
Haitin Bridge Alliance
Immigrant Hope - Brooklyn, NY
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
International Institute of New England
Justice For Our Neighbors Houston
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
New York Immigration Coalition
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Political Asylum Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project
Rian Immigrant Center
Rosie's Place
San Antonio Region Justice For Our Neighbors
Univ of Mass School of Law Immigration Law Clinic
Yemeni American Merchant Association (YAMA)
Central American Resource Center (CARECEN-LA)



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

July 1, 2020

Ms. Jill Marie Bussey
Director of Advocacy
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc
8757 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Bussey:

Thank you for your April 22, 2020 letter. Acting Secretary Wolf asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has no greater responsibility than ensuring the safety and security of our country. Responding to the pandemic requires everyone to work within rapidly changing, complex circumstances that create a variety of situations and conditions unique to individuals and communities.

Based on actions taken before the COVID-19 outbreak, DHS extended the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for Yemen (through September 3, 2021) and Somalia (through September 17, 2021). Further, DHS has automatically extended the validity of Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) issued under the TPS designation for Yemen with an original expiration date of March 3, 2020, for 180 days, through Aug. 30, 2020. Additionally, aliens who have EADs with an expiration date of Sept. 3, 2018, and who applied for a new EAD during the last re-registration period for Yemen TPS but have not yet received their new EAD are also covered by this automatic extension.

DHS has also automatically extended the validity of EADs issued under the TPS designation for Somalia with an original expiration date of March 17, 2020, for 180 days, through Sept. 13, 2020. The offices that adjudicate requests for EADs for individuals under the TPS designations for Yemen and Somalia, continue to operate and process renewal requests, and we do not currently anticipate delays in the processing of EADs for the affected populations. Given this context, at this time, we do not have immediate plans to further extend the re-registration period for the affected population.

It is important to emphasize that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) continues to accept and process petitions and applications for immigration benefits. Further, on March 30, 2020, USCIS announced that we will reuse previously submitted biometrics in order to process valid EAD extension requests due to the temporary closure of Application Support Centers (ASC) to the public to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Applicants seeking an EAD renewal who had an appointment scheduled with an ASC on or after the temporary closure

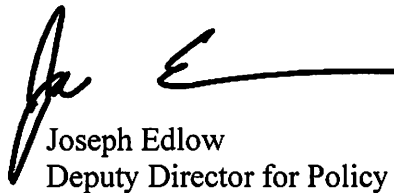
Ms. Jill Marie Bussey
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to the public as well as those who have filed an extension will have their applications processed using previously submitted biometrics. This policy will remain in effect until ASCs resume normal operations to the public.

Our website and outreach efforts provide guidance, resources, and information to the public on the actions and policies we are implementing through these uncertain times. For policy updates, operational changes, and COVID-19 information, please visit uscis.gov/coronavirus.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important matter. We will consider the recommendations you have put forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ja' followed by a long horizontal line with a small upward curve at the end.

Joseph Edlow
Deputy Director for Policy