

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 14, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Ur Jaddou  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
5900 Capital Gateway Drive  
Camp Springs, MD 20746

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Director Jaddou:

We members of Congress write today in a bipartisan fashion to urge the administration to expeditiously use its statutory authority to redesignate, for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Venezuelan nationals who have been continuously residing or physically present in the United States since September 2023.

The current situation in Venezuela is dire. Rampant corruption, government-sponsored repression and human rights violations,<sup>1</sup> widespread gang violence, and massive hyperinflation have resulted in a monumental economic and political collapse that has caused over seven million Venezuelans to flee the country since 2015.<sup>2</sup> In turn, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has categorized the situation in Venezuela as the “largest external displacement crisis in the world,” second only to Ukraine.<sup>3</sup> These immigrant families have continually fled escalating violence government persecution, crushing poverty, malnutrition, and absences of medicine and essential services in Venezuela,<sup>4</sup> brought about by what economists from Harvard University and the International Monetary Fund have described as the “single largest economic collapse outside of the war in [over 40] years.”<sup>5</sup> In reflection of this, the New

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<sup>1</sup> María Luisa Paúl, Venezuela’s top leaders committing crimes against humanity: U.N. report, Wash. Post (Sept. 21, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/09/21/venezuela-crimes-against-humanity-report-united-nations/>.

<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Buschschlüter, *Venezuela crisis: 7.1m leave country since 2015*, BBC News (Oct. 17, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-63279800>.

<sup>3</sup> *Venezuela Situation*, UNHCR (last updated Jan. 2023), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Julie Turkewitz, *In Record Numbers, Venezuelans Risk a Deadly Trek to Reach the U.S. Border*, N.Y. Times (Oct. 7, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/world/americas/venezuelan-migrants-us-border.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Anatoly Kurmanaev, *Venezuela’s Collapse Is the Worst Outside of War in Decades, Economists Say*, N.Y. Times (May 17, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/world/americas/venezuela-economy.html>.

York Times has documented how “tens of thousands” of Venezuelan migrants—often families with children—have crossed rivers, scaled mountains, and traversed the dangerous “Darién Gap” in Panama hopes of reaching safety in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> In light of this ongoing situation, it is our view that the U.S. should treat these Venezuelan migrants with the utmost compassion, dignity, and respect.

Congress has provided the Secretary of Homeland Security with the statutory authority to designate or redesignate a foreign state for TPS.<sup>7</sup> Currently, immigrants from sixteen countries, including Venezuela, have been designated for TPS by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), subject to various parameters.<sup>8</sup> However, under Venezuela’s present TPS designation, Venezuelan immigrants who arrived in the U.S. after March 8, 2021, remain ineligible to apply for or receive TPS in the U.S.—even if they meet all other TPS eligibility criteria.

Although TPS is only available for Venezuelans who have maintained a continuous physical residence in the U.S. since before March 9, 2021, the conditions that led to the previous designation of Venezuela for TPS have continued to worsen. The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela warrants a favorable exercise of discretion for the redesignation of Venezuela for TPS. Therefore, we strongly encourage the administration to redesignate Venezuelans for TPS status by extending TPS eligibility to all Venezuelan nationals who have been in the U.S. since September 2023.

We, as both Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress, urge you to protect displaced Venezuelans currently residing in the U.S., and we look forward to your prompt response on this matter.

Sincerely,



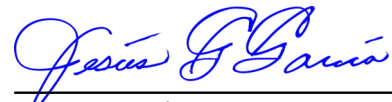
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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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María Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

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<sup>6</sup> Turkewitz, *supra* note 4.

<sup>7</sup> See 8 U.S.C. 1254a(b)(1).

<sup>8</sup> *Temporary Protected Status Designated Country: Venezuela*, USCIS (last updated Mar. 30, 2023), <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-venezuela>.



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



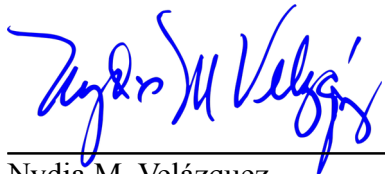
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



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André Carson  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Jennifer González-Colón  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



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Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



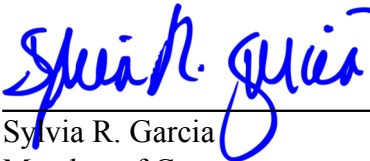
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J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



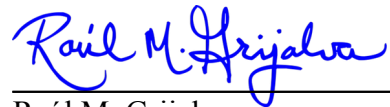
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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



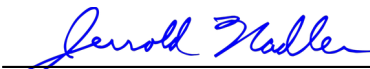
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Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Ferrol Nadler  
Member of Congress



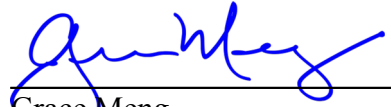
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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress



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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress