

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our deep concern about the number of individuals who have fled Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis and again urge your Administration to provide Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible Venezuelans.

As you know, Venezuela has now become the number one country of origin for individuals claiming asylum in the U.S. and nearly 30,000 Venezuelans applied for asylum with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in 2018 alone.¹ This constitutes nearly one-third of claims filed with the agency in 2018 and the most of any country, according to statistics in recent years.

In addition, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recently announced that the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela has skyrocketed to over four million since 2015.² Globally, UNHCR reports that Venezuelans made more asylum requests than any other nationality and now represent more than one in five asylum claims made anywhere in the world. Venezuelans are fleeing Nicolás Maduro's corrupt regime, attempting to escape a country ravaged by violence, destitution, and the widespread absence of basic food and medicine.

Venezuelans are fleeing their country at a staggering pace and it appears that the current crisis will only accelerate. The Organization of American States estimates that by 2020 the number of Venezuelans fleeing could reach 7.5 million. While the majority of these individuals have sought refuge in the region—with Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Brazil hosting approximately three million Venezuelans—it is likely that this number will increase in the United States as well.

Given the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Venezuela, we again urge your Administration to grant TPS to eligible Venezuelans currently present in the United States. Without TPS, Venezuelans in the United States are at risk of deportation back to a country that is suffering a

¹ See, e.g., Annual Flow Report, *Refugees and Asylees: 2017*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, available at https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Refugees_Asytees_2017.pdf (In 2017, there were 27,579 affirmative asylum cases from Venezuela, out of which 548 were approved).

² See, e.g., United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Refugees and migrants from Venezuela top 4 million: UNHCR and IOM*, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/6/5cfa2a4a4/refugees-migrants-venezuela-top-4-million-unhcr-iom.html>.

widespread humanitarian tragedy, and data from your Administration shows there was a 35 percent increase in deportations of Venezuelan citizens in FY2018.³

As 24 Senators emphasized in a March 7th letter that you have yet to respond to, an individual is ineligible for TPS if he or she has a criminal background or poses a threat to national security. The decision to deny, withdraw or terminate TPS is in the sole discretion of the U.S. Government. Moreover, TPS does not make a beneficiary eligible for legal permanent resident status or U.S. citizenship. When the TPS designation of a country is terminated, beneficiaries revert to the same immigration status they maintained before the designation.

Designating Venezuela for TPS would alleviate the suffering of innocent Venezuelan civilians and demonstrate our nation's commitment to supporting a safe democratic transition in Venezuela so that individuals can return home soon. It would also reaffirm the United States' historical role as a beacon of light to those fleeing oppression.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this issue. We look forward to your response

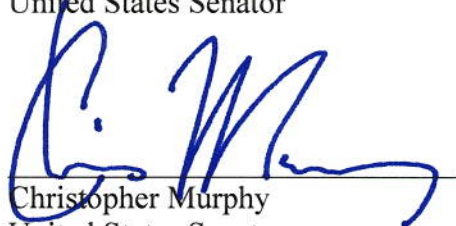
Sincerely,



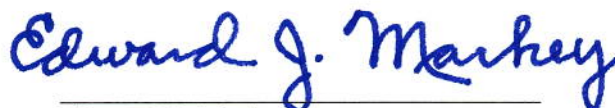
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United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

³ See, e.g., *Fiscal Year 2018 ICE Enforcement and Removals Operations Report*, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Department of Homeland Security, available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/about/offices/ero/pdf/eroFY2018Report.pdf>

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Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono
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Tammy Duckworth

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Catherine Cortez Masto
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Tim Kaine

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Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Bernie Sanders

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