

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 27, 2020

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 heightened concern about the number of individuals who have fled Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis and are in urgent need of protection in the United States. As the people of Venezuela continue to suffer political oppression and economic deprivation at the hands of the Nicolas Maduro's regime, they now also face the alarming spread of the COVID-19 pandemic with a public health system in ruins. To that end, we again urge your Administration to immediately provide Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for eligible Venezuelans who are not able to return safely to their country.

As you know, Venezuela continues to be 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 (USCIS) in 2018 alone.¹ Since 2015, more than five million Venezuelans have fled their country.² They have fled Nicolás Maduro's corrupt regime, attempting to escape a country ravaged by violence, destitution, and the widespread absence of basic food and medicine. Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Brazil are hosting approximately three million Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and it is important for the United States to demonstrate solidarity with the Venezuelan people and these generous host countries.

With the world confronting the COVID-19 pandemic—which has presented major challenges to public health systems everywhere—most hospitals in Venezuela lack running water, electricity and basic medical supplies. A significant number of Venezuelan medical professionals have fled the country's political and economic crisis. We fear that the coronavirus will spread unmitigated and further exacerbate the country's humanitarian crisis. As of July 2, 2020 the Maduro regime has acknowledged more than 6,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19. However, international medical experts and human rights organizations suggest that the number is certainly much higher, given the limited availability of reliable testing, limited transparency, and the persecution of medical professionals, scientists and journalists who report independent data on COVID-19 cases.³

¹ See, e.g., Annual Flow Report, *Refugees and Asylees: 2018*, Office of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, available at https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Refugees_Asylees_2018.pdf (In 2018, there were 28,401 affirmative asylum cases from Venezuela).

² Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants for Venezuela, R4V, available at <https://r4v.info/en/situations/platform>

In July 2019, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 549, the Venezuela TPS Act, a bill that designates Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), providing approximately 200,000 Venezuelan nationals with protection in the United States. However, Republican members of the Senate have repeatedly opposed meaningful action on this bill. Moreover, your Administration has the authority it needs to designate Venezuela for TPS today given that conditions in Venezuela clearly meet the requirements of the TPS statute, yet it has failed to do so.

Given the extraordinary humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, compounded by the COVID-19 epidemic, 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 where their lives, safety, and freedom are threatened. Designating Venezuela for TPS would demonstrate our nation's commitment to supporting vulnerable Venezuelans until they can return to their country safely.

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

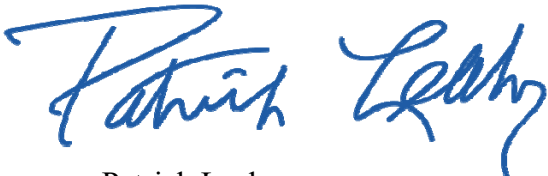
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ **Chris Van Hollen**

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator




Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



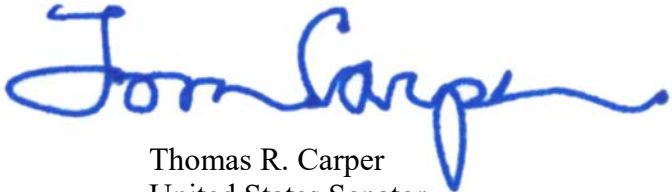
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



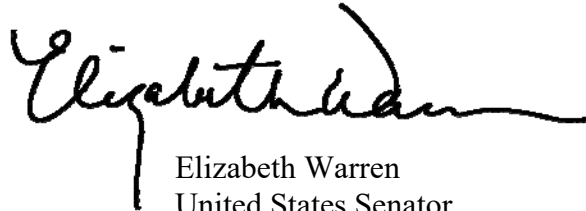
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



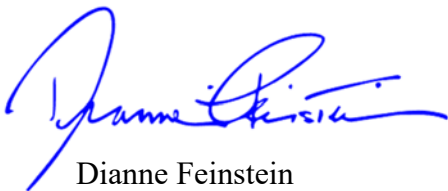
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



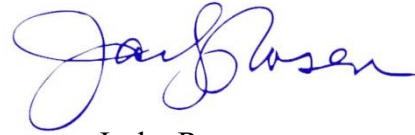
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



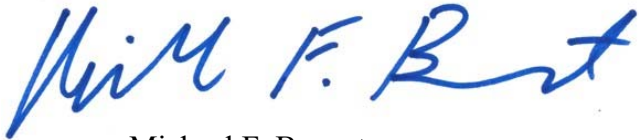
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

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Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Jacky Rosen in blue ink.

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Michael F. Bennet in blue ink.

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator