

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 23, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

We write to urgently request your administration expand Temporary Protected Status protections for migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. We have watched with concern the worsening humanitarian crisis in Central American countries in the aftermath of Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020, continued severe drought, and the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe designating Guatemala and redesignating El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) would go a long way in assisting those communities in the United States and enable them to better support their families back home.

The pressures of the November 2020 hurricanes compounded with the long-term effects of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened food insecurity and violence in countries in Central America. Hurricanes Eta and Iota left over 9.3 million people,¹ including 3.5 million children, affected and forced to leave their home communities. The hurricanes also left long-lasting damage by destroying key healthcare, education, and other infrastructure essential to everyday lives. Almost a year later, millions in Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador still lacked access to humanitarian assistance, housing, and basic services.²

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/hurricanes-eta-and-iota#:~:text=An%20estimated%209.2%20million%20people,%2C%20Honduras%2C%20Nicaragua%20and%20Panama.>

² <https://gho.unocha.org/part-three/disaster-response-during-pandemic-hurricanes-eta-and-iota-central-america#:~:text=Eta%20and%20Iota%20made%20landfall,nearly%20half%20of%20Honduras's%20population>

The COVID-19 pandemic and the hurricanes interrupted the crucial flow of remittances to Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, which served a crucial role in supporting the region's economic recovery. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) estimates areas affected by the two hurricanes, as well as the Dry Corridor in Honduras and Guatemala, will remain in crisis levels of food insecurity through at least May 2022.³ Over 8 million people went hungry in 2021,⁴ quadrupling from 2018, and these numbers will continue to rise as we see the increased effects of climate change on agriculture outputs, security, and economic integration. As your administration has recognized climate change as a key contributor to migration, these designations would support the administration's efforts to address the root causes of migration as communities in Central America have weathered the brunt of climate change's effects including consecutive years of drought and extreme weather events.

The changing political dynamics in these countries also underscore the difficulties individuals face in returning home. For example, the crackdown on civil society, journalists, and other dissidents in Nicaragua over the last few years has worsened to the point where return for many Nicaraguans means imprisonment or other forms of punishment. Similar situations have emerged over the last year in El Salvador and Guatemala. The U.S. Government must respond to these developments by adding these TPS designations to the larger landscape of assistance for Central American countries and as part of the administration's effort to curb corruption, impunity, and violence in the region.

We believe that conditions on the ground in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua constitute "extraordinary and temporary conditions" that prevent nationals from safely returning.⁵ These countries have been dealing with the aftermath of such events for years and as conditions continue to worsen and new challenges arise, the United States should provide temporary protection and refuge. Furthermore, these designations would provide the U.S. government with an important tool to address root causes of migration from Central American countries by helping increase the flow of remittances and supporting government efforts to address in-country conditions without the additional tax of a large influx of individuals forced to return home. The designation would likely protect nearly 1.5 million migrants currently in the United States, providing immediate relief to these individuals and their families. We ask that these TPS designations be paired with a robust and comprehensive messaging campaign that offers clear instructions regarding eligibility and application procedures, as to prevent confusion and mass migration that occurred after the May 2021 Haiti TPS designation.

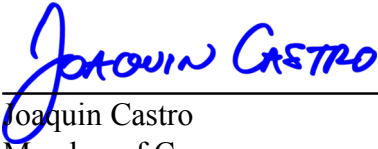
It is our view that Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua meet the circumstances and standards for TPS. We look forward to continuing to support the efforts from your administration to address the root causes of migration in Central America in a holistic manner, including by taking this important step to uphold humanitarian protections and safeguard U.S. national security interests. Thank you for your consideration.

³ <https://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean/food-security-outlook/march-2022>

⁴ <https://www.wfp.org/news/battered-climate-shocks-and-bruised-economic-crisis-millions-more-central-america-face-hunger>

⁵ <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



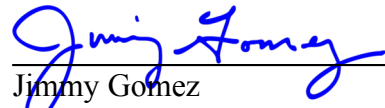
Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



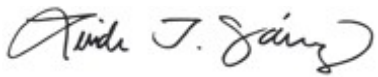
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



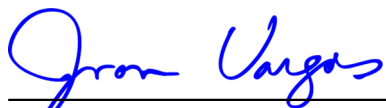
Bonnie Watson Coleman
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André Carson
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Frederica S. Wilson
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Juan Vargas
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Anthony G. Brown
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Terri A. Sewell
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J. Luis Correa
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Dwight Evans
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



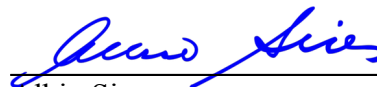
Grace Meng
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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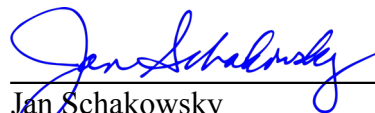
Pramila Jayapal
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Albio Sires
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Barbara Lee
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Jan Schakowsky
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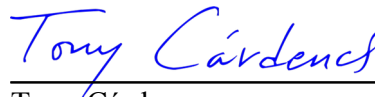
Troy Carter
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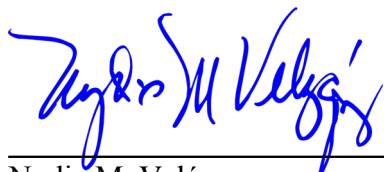
Mark Pocan
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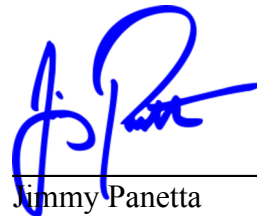
Ruben Gallego
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Ayanna Pressley
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Mark DeSaulnier
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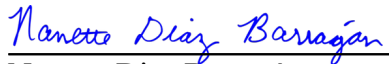
Jimmy Panetta
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Thomas R. Suozzi
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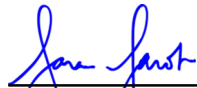
Norma J. Torres
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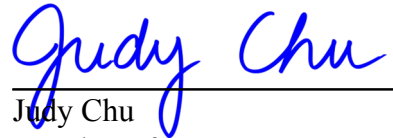
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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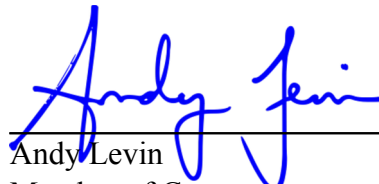
Raul Ruiz, M.D.
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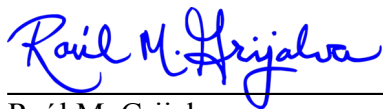
Jason Crow
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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



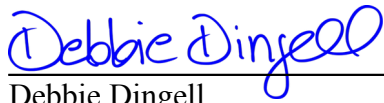
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Gerald E. Connolly
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



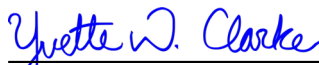
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



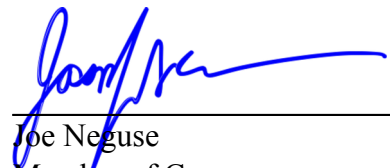
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
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Marie Newman
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Kathleen M. Rice
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Sean Casten
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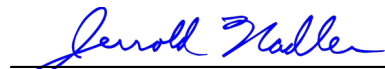
A. Donald McEachin
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Ilhan Omar
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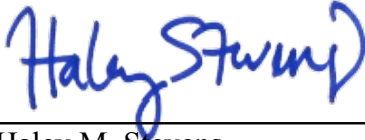
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



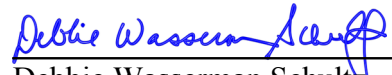
Gwen S. Moore
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Zoe Lofgren
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Haley M. Stevens
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
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