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September 29, 2017

The Honorable Elaine C. Duke
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue center, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Duke:

On behalf of Oxfam America's 1.4 million supporters in the U.S I am writing to ask you to exercise your authority under Section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C 1254(a)) to extend Temporary Protection Status (TPS) for citizens from El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. It is in the national security and economic interest of the United States to extend TPS and is consistent with US foreign policy goals in the region.

At the June Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America in Miami, Vice President Pence affirmed the U.S. government's commitment to a "stronger, safer, and more prosperous Central America." Ending TPS for the estimated 350,000 Central Americans with TPS would have profound negative impacts on these goals, undermining U.S. investments in improved security, prosperity, and governance in the region.

The 2014 U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America determined that stronger government institutions, improved security conditions and economic growth are instrumental to addressing the root causes of out-migration in the region. While there are a myriad of reasons for out-migration, the U.S. Strategy stated that the persistent and troubling economic and social indicators are the reflection of "a region in crisis." Four of the five countries with the highest homicide rates in the world are in Central America; and the region suffers from deficient economic growth that has severely lagged behind the rest of Latin America and East Asia; and it has a burgeoning uneducated and unemployed youth population with five million more youth needing to join the workforce in the next ten years.

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Moreover endemic corruption continues to derail economic development, which means that violence and out-migration pressures will continue to worsen. Because of these continuing dire conditions and the implicit challenges they present to our nation, the U.S. government has since 2014 allocated \$1.3 billion USD to implement the Strategy for Engagement.

Deporting Central Americans that possibly have more education and greater resources would most certainly displace their compatriots who are less educated and more resource strapped, adding to already high levels of internal displacement in El Salvador and Honduras. According to the Honduran National Human Rights Commission, there was a 22% increase in the registered cases of forced internal displacement or risk of the same from January to May 2017 compared with the same time period in 2016. Massive deportation would most likely have the unintended consequences of forcing yet another wave of out-migration to the U.S. by those newly displaced. Further, neither El Salvador nor Honduras provides services that successfully reintegrate the migrants that are deported. Lack of jobs and social services for deported migrants will leave them vulnerable and with no choice but to flee again.

Ending TPS for Central Americans will also have serious consequences on the already deficient economies of these countries by cutting the remittances sent back to their families. Remittances are a significant part of their economies. In 2016, for example, Salvadorans sent \$4.58 billion in remittances, nearly double the amount of all U.S. formal economic activity, including foreign direct investment. For Honduras, the amount of remittances sent back was \$3.6 billion. For both countries, remittances make up over 17% of total GDP. Losing this important revenue will have a devastating impact on these economies that rely on the taxes earned from consumer goods bought by remittance recipients, further gutting funds available for social and employment programs. Again, the unintended consequence of ending TPS and massively deporting Central Americans would be weaker economies incapable of addressing the needs of their people and forcing people to migrate by any means.

U.S. taxpayers would also be negatively affected. It is well documented that both legal and unauthorized immigrants contribute significantly to the national and state economies. Last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reported that from 1990 to 2010, refugees and immigrants produced net benefits worth \$50 billion a year to the U.S. population. Even more, 26 million foreigners in the American labor market added some \$2 trillion to the American economy last year alone.

TPS holders also contribute to national and state economies. In a document published in April 2017, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center reported that TPS holders contribute \$6.9 billion to Social Security and Medicare, \$45.2 billion in GDP over ten years. Finally, the cost of deporting all Salvadoran, Honduran and Haitian TPS holders to US taxpayers would be minimally an astounding \$3.1 billion dollars. Undoubtedly, ending TPS would also have a negative impact on already struggling state and municipal governments in the United States.

The U.S. government has spent significant resources to build security, strengthen government institutions and support anti-poverty programs in Central America. A decision to end TPS would undermine this support and have a truly destabilizing economic and social impact on these countries and on the US economy. Please extend TPS to Central Americans so the successes of the US Strategy for Engagement can continue to grow while Congress works to find a more permanent solution. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abby Maxman', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Abby Maxman | President & CEO
Oxfam America



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

March 12, 2018

Ms. Abby Maxman
President & CEO
Oxfam America
226 Causeway Street, 5th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

Dear Ms. Maxman:

Thank you for your September 29, 2017 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

I appreciate your interest in the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations for El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The Secretary of Homeland Security's authority to designate or redesignate a country for TPS and to extend or terminate a country's existing designation is based upon specific statutory criteria. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 244(b). U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is principally responsible for advising the Secretary on TPS issues and implementing the program.

At least 60 days before the current expiration date for a TPS designation, the Secretary must review conditions in the foreign country and, after consultation with other appropriate federal agencies, determine whether the statutory conditions for TPS continue to be met. Under the INA, if the Secretary determines that the conditions for designation are no longer met with respect to a country, the Secretary is required to terminate the designation.

See INA § 244(b)(1),(3).

Secretary Nielsen decided to terminate the TPS designation for El Salvador after considering information from several U.S. Government sources, with a delay of 18 months to allow for an orderly transition before the designation terminates on September 9, 2019. DHS is committed to an orderly transition that will allow time for El Salvador to prepare for the return and reintegration of its citizens. USCIS will work with the State Department and the government of El Salvador to help inform relevant stakeholders in-country and in the United States to ensure an orderly return and reintegration of El Salvador's citizens. Additional details on the Secretary's decision and the process for current El Salvador TPS beneficiaries to renew their work authorization documentation until TPS terminates on September 9, 2019, can be found in the notice that was published in the *Federal Register* on January 18, 2018.

In regards to Honduras, former Acting Secretary Duke did not make a determination by the 60-day deadline for Honduras (November 6, 2017), resulting in an automatic six-month extension of the designation. Details regarding this extension and the process for Honduran TPS beneficiaries to re-register can be found on the USCIS website and in the *Federal Register* notice published on December 15, 2017.

After considering information from several U.S. Government sources, on November 6, 2017, former Acting Secretary Duke announced the termination of Nicaragua's TPS designation after determining that the statutory conditions for designation no longer continued to be met. To allow for an orderly transition, the former Acting Secretary delayed the effective date by 12 months. Accordingly, Nicaragua's TPS designation will terminate on January 5, 2019. The 12-month period will provide time for individuals with TPS to arrange for their departure or to seek an alternative lawful immigration status in the United States. Additional information on the termination of Nicaragua's TPS designation can be found on the USCIS website and in a notice that was published in the *Federal Register* on December 15, 2017.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Please feel free to share this information with the cosigners of your letter. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna".

L. Francis Cissna
Director