

EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

Assemblies of God
Bethany Christian Services
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
Faith and Community Empowerment
National Association of Evangelicals
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
The Wesleyan Church
World Relief

September 9, 2019

Dear President Trump, Vice-President Pence, Acting Secretary McAleenan, and Secretary Pompeo:

With the situation in Venezuela continuing to deteriorate under the regime of Nicolas Maduro, we are writing to urge you to extend Temporary Protected Status or similar protections to Venezuelans who are currently present in the United States. Given the situation of political repression, shortages of food, water, gasoline and medicine, and state-sponsored violence toward political dissidents, we believe it would be inhumane to require Venezuelans to return to their country at this time, even as millions have fled to neighboring countries.

This is precisely the sort of situation for which Congress created Temporary Protected Status in 1990, entrusting the Administration with the discretion to provide temporary legal status and work authorization to individuals from a particular country facing a humanitarian crisis. TPS would allow Venezuelans already in the United States – whether on a temporary visa or out of status – to stay and work lawfully on a temporary basis, until conditions have improved. To qualify, individuals would need to pass a criminal background check and register with the government. TPS beneficiaries generally do not qualify for public benefits, but with employment authorization they can both meet key needs in the U.S. labor market and contribute as taxpayers to the United States. Many also send part of their earnings back to family members remaining in Venezuela, where it has become increasingly difficult to survive without remittances from abroad.

Our concern for the welfare of the Venezuelan people is rooted in our Christian faith. As evangelical Christians, we believe that each human life is made in God's image with inherent dignity and that God commands his people to care for the poor and oppressed. As a country that has been blessed by God with resources and opportunities – including record low unemployment – we believe the U.S. has a responsibility to stand with those facing oppression and hardship in other parts of the world, just as we have done at key moments throughout our history.

Local churches throughout the United States are already eagerly supporting individuals from Venezuela within their communities, but only the U.S. government can grant the work authorization and legal protections that would allow them to lawfully provide for themselves and to live without fear of deportation. At present, many Venezuelans within our churches feel deeply conflicted as their temporary visas reach their expiration: they want to respect the law, but they also know that to return at this moment to Venezuela may mean subjecting themselves and/or their families to hunger, deprivation and a high risk of violence.

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We urge you to extend Temporary Protected Status to qualifying Venezuelans presently in the country. As you consider this important decision, we are praying that God would grant you wisdom.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Doug Clay, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God USA

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Russell Moore, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Chris Palusky, President & CEO, Bethany Christian Services

Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference