



Written Testimony of  
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Submitted to the  
U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee  
for a Hearing on  
Protecting Dreamers and TPS Recipients  
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The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) values the opportunity to provide testimony to the House Judiciary Committee and urges Congress to swiftly enact legislation to provide permanent protection and a path to citizenship for Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and persons with Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) represents 2 million members across the United States and Canada. Founded in 1921 by immigrant janitors in Chicago, SEIU is deeply committed to immigrant and racial justice. Our mission statement embedded in our Constitution states "We believe our strength comes from our unity, and that we must not be divided by forces of discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, or immigration status." We represent diverse immigrant communities across North America and, consistent with our core mission statement and Constitution, work to enforce equality and non-discrimination in the workplace and in our country's institutions.

SEIU is the largest healthcare union in the United States and more than half of SEIU's members work in the healthcare industry as doctors, nurses, lab technicians, aides, home care and nursing home workers, and other medical service and professionals. Our members also include thousands of social workers, educators in early learning and family child care centers, and other public service workers employed by local and state governments. In addition, SEIU's members include, among others, janitors, airport workers, security officers, adjunct professors, graduate students, retail, distribution, laundry, and fast food workers. Our members have strong ties to diverse immigrant communities across North America and include foreign-born U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and immigrants authorized to work in the United States, including as recipients of TPS, DED, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

For nearly 30 years, the TPS statute<sup>1</sup> provided humanitarian relief and lawful immigration status to eligible immigrants whose home countries' experience natural disasters, armed conflict, or other extraordinary conditions that make return unsafe. Similarly, DED offered a safe haven to Liberians impacted by two brutal civil wars and living in the U.S. since 1991. Since 2012, the DACA program has permitted young immigrants to achieve their dreams and give back to the country in which they were raised. Absent legislation, the vast majority of those who have benefited from these programs – and who have given much to our country in return – face removal to lands they left long ago.

TPS, DED and DACA recipients have made invaluable contributions to the American labor force as homecare providers, community health workers, doctors, lawyers, janitors, childcare workers, and more. They are the working parents and siblings of hundreds of thousands of American citizens,<sup>2</sup> providing what is often their family's sole source of income. Our country chose to offer TPS, DED and DACA recipients stability, the opportunity to work, and a place to raise their families in safety. In response, TPS recipients worked hard, paid taxes, purchased homes, volunteered at their children's schools and churches, and contributed to their communities and our economy.

SEIU's members reflect the integral role TPS, DED and DACA recipients play in the economic and social fabric of American communities, and their countless contributions to our country.

- An SEIU member residing in Brooklyn, New York, is a recipient of TPS, who traveled to the United States before the devastating earthquake in Haiti to promote the culture and heritage of Haiti during the Haitian Independence Day celebrations in Miami. In Haiti, he was a teacher both of art and martial arts, and after arriving in the United States, he continued teaching art and culture to young Haitians. Through TPS he has been able to work as a security officer at LaGuardia Airport ensuring our country's safety while working part-time job as a martial arts instructor.
- An SEIU member living in San Jose, California with his U.S. citizen siblings, aged 18, 12 and 8, is a DACA recipient who came to the United States from El Salvador when he was 8-years-old. He attended school in California, graduating high school and later attending community college. DACA allowed him to become a homecare worker caring for an elderly man who is blind, diabetic, has kidney failure, a pacemaker, and is on dialysis. He picks up his siblings from school, helps them with their homework, and does chores around his house. He attends church regularly and is involved in a leadership development

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<sup>1</sup> 8 U.S.C. § 1254a.

<sup>2</sup> Priscilla Alvarez, *Will DACA Parents Be Forced to Leave Their U.S.-Citizen Children Behind?*, The Atlantic, Oct. 21, 2017, <https://perma.cc/XD7H-282Q>.; Robert Warren & Donald Kerwin, *A Statistical and Demographic Profile of the US Temporary Protected Status Population from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti*, 5 J. ON MIGRATION & HUM. SEC. 577, 578 (2017).

program with his millennial co-workers. As a child in El Salvador, he faced danger and uncertainty. DACA has allowed him to live in safety and security in the U.S. and contribute to our economy and his community.

- An SEIU member living in Atlanta, Georgia entered the United States from El Salvador nearly three decades ago, and as a TPS recipient she has been able to work in an industrial laundry for 26 years. She pays her taxes, volunteers in her community, her union, and her workplace, and is deeply connected to her U.S. citizen child and grandchildren, one of whom is a member of the military.

Legislation is desperately needed so that these SEIU members and thousands of others who have lived and worked in the United States legally for years and even decades can remain here without fear of deportation and thrive. The time in which they have lived in the United States has changed their relationship to our nation as they have formed families, close friendships, and developed valuable skills. No one benefits if they are now forcibly removed.

SEIU members support a permanent solution for Dreamers and people with TPS and DED because we know that working people and their loved ones – no matter where they were born – want and deserve the same things: economic stability and security for their families. Whether a TPS recipient janitor from El Salvador who cleans the Harvard University campus, a DACA recipient community health worker from Mexico who is the sole caretaker of her three American-citizen siblings in California, or a DED recipient from Liberia who cares for the elderly and disabled in Minnesota, immigrants across every sector touch all our lives, contribute to America, and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

As things stand, these hardworking individuals confront terrible uncertainty, and their families, friends, employers, and communities face needless loss. The loss is needless because Congress has the opportunity, and the duty, to prevent it. Legislation allowing them to stay and to adjust to permanent residence will preserve communities, grow our economy, and allow children, spouses and other U.S. citizen family members to remain with their loved ones.

SEIU has long strongly supported much broader reform that would put in place a fair immigration process that is consistent with our values, legalizes undocumented immigrants, ensures family unity, and levels the playing field for all workers. Sadly, that broader reform must wait. But permanent protection for Dreamers and TPS and DED holders is urgently needed to prevent the loss of status of nearly a million people, including SEIU members, and should be an immediate order of business for this Congress. SEIU urges Congress to enact such legislation to further our countries' economic strength and uphold our moral values.