

Subject: TPS Hearing Statement

Dear Representative Jaypal,

My name is Reverend Sharon Woomer. I've been a pastor in Charleroi, Pennsylvania for more than 15 years, and in recent years, I have had the joy and honor of serving my immigrant neighbors, most of whom have arrived in Charleroi from Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Today, our congregation includes more than 60 Haitian adults—primarily women—and more than 35 of their children. Our Haitian friends are a blessing. We celebrate graduations and birthdays. We share and exchange seasonal traditions. We support one another in prayer. In every sense, they are families striving to build a better future—just like any of us.

When our immigrant friends first joined our church, the vast majority of them were fully employed working for warehouse companies like UPS or Amazon or working in one of the many food-packing factories in our region.

Many of our community came here with extensive professional backgrounds - social workers, teachers, financial managers, etc. and they are employed alongside equally very hard working neighbors with an excellent work ethic.

They are here to build a new life and a new future- just like all of our immigrant ancestors.

And like all the immigrants before them they have enriched and stabilized and added to the economic stability of their new home.

Since they've joined us, I've made strides to provide services where they felt gaps like food assistance. But more importantly, the community expressed a desire to assimilate and wanted help with things like English classes and trauma counseling. Through it all, it's been my vocation and joy. But it was never a strain.

But that changed. Once the TPS status was revoked (by executive order in March 2025), we suddenly experienced real strain—in ways we'd never felt before. With the ever-fluctuating and uncertain status of their work permits, suddenly the community faced greater and greater needs. We became aware of growing unemployment as local industries began laying off workers and work cards were prematurely revoked. Food and clothing assistance was no longer a bonus, but a necessity.

The worst part of all of this is the fear and the stress the community has experienced as the uncertainty of their legal status hangs in a gray state—neither illegal or legal. But the danger never recedes. In their asylum applications, we're hearing horrendous stories of rape and murder and kidnapping. On Telegram, their families back home send them livestreamed images of decapitations, amputations, and mutilations.

Meanwhile, last October, the U.N. estimated that another 5.7 million people—half the population—face acute food insecurity. And so, that's our strain.

And so it is under these circumstances that I ask, if the panelists speaking about TPS are worried about “strain” on resources, I’m praying you’ll help to protect the ability for our Refugee friends to continue building community here in Charleroi.

Sincerest Regards,
Rev. Sharon Woomer