



American Friends Service Committee

Quaker values in action

Statement of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee on Protecting Dreamers and TPS Recipients on Wednesday, March 6th, 2019

As a 102-year-old faith-based organization grounded in Quaker belief in respecting the dignity and worth of every person, the American Friends Service Committee urges congress to enact a permanent solution that creates a roadmap to citizenship for all Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure holders, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients.

Our decades of experience working with immigrant communities across the United States inform our support for measures that ensure the integration of immigrants as full members of our society rather than actions that seek to isolate them from communities that they call home. The administration's inhumane termination of TPS for various countries, DED for Liberians, and DACA for young immigrants threaten the safety, well-being, and livelihoods of more than one million immigrants in the U.S. – as well as their families and communities.

AFSC has seen firsthand the importance of protections provided by programs like TPS, DED and DACA.

TPS is a life-saving immigration status that allows foreign nationals to remain in the U.S. if, while they were in the U.S., something catastrophic happened in their country of origin that prevented their safe return. Most affected TPS holders have been given 12 to 18 months to obtain other forms of immigration relief or leave the United States and return to potentially life-threatening situations. Members of Congress, faith leaders, impacted populations, and community members have all called for permanent protections for TPS holders currently residing in the U.S. They have conveyed to the administration the terrible country conditions that would make returning these individuals and families to those countries a dangerous and consequential mistake.

DED protected 4,000 Liberian TPS holders residing in the U.S. from returning to Liberia at a time when the nation faced a public health crisis. DED holders have lived in the U.S. for over a decade and are vital community members. DACA has offered stability to the lives of over 700,000 young people also known as Dreamers by giving them opportunity and peace of mind to pursue their dreams, provide for their loved ones, and be active members of their communities.

AFSC's decades of supporting TPS holders and DACA recipients through direct legal immigration services, accompaniment, and advocacy lead us to call for policies that eliminate the uncertainty that TPS and DED holders and DACA recipients have faced for the past years. In addition to the stress, chaos, and turmoil our community members are suffering due to the TPS, DED and DACA terminations, people are already losing their jobs, access to driver's licenses, and face other consequences because of the terminations.

Granting legal permanent residency with a roadmap to citizenship for TPS, DED, and DACA recipients will strengthen communities and support family stability. Most TPS, DED, and DACA recipients have been in the U.S. for decades and are deeply integrated into our communities. They are from mixed-status families of U.S. citizens, TPS holders, and undocumented individuals. They provide emotional and financial support to loved ones, and shoulder responsibilities in schools, churches, and civic organizations.



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Deporting TPS, DED, and DACA recipients would separate hundreds of thousands of families, which is morally abhorrent. Nearly 270,000 U.S. citizen children have a parent who is a TPS recipient from Honduras, El Salvador, or Haiti, and at least 200,000 U.S. citizen children have a parent who is a DACA recipient.

TPS, DED, and DACA recipients are vital players in the fabric of their local economies and the national economy. The clear majority—88.5 percent—of TPS recipients participate in the labor force, which is much higher than the national average. A roadmap to citizenship will provide stability for these individuals to continue to gain from and contribute to the economy, earn higher incomes, establish more businesses, and otherwise make more contributions to the welfare of their families and communities.

Offering Lawful Permanent Residency for TPS and DACA recipients would support regional stability. Remittances make up more than 15% of the GDP of some TPS-designated countries, which are also countries of origin for many DACA recipients. A sudden loss of this earned income would have serious economic implications for impacted countries, increasing instability and causing reverberations across the region. The impact of such a preventable loss will only fuel cycles of migration as those impacted by crushing poverty seek to save their lives and the lives of their families.

AFSC seeks to highlight the urgent need for a solution. Lawsuits to preserve TPS and DACA are making their way through the courts. In a few cases, federal judges have issued injunctions to halt deportation for certain groups. However, many immigrant youths and TPS and DED holders are not covered by those decisions. Moreover, even those protected by the injunction have a reprieve, not permanent protection. As soon as March 31st, Liberian DED holders will lose protections and be subject to harmful deportation proceedings. Legislation, not litigation can provide a permanent solution for TPS and DED holders and their families. We can't wait for the courts to solve this problem – we need legislation that keeps families and communities together. Without a legislative fix, these terminations will bring about the next family separation crisis.

AFSC supports efforts that provide a roadmap to citizenship for TPS and DED holders and DACA recipients. This roadmap should be established on a platform of shared values and humane treatment of all immigrants. We benefit as a society when hundreds of thousands of residents can plan for their futures without fear of upheaval.

AFSC urges Congress to provide permanent relief for TPS and DED holders and DACA recipients without expanding detention infrastructure, increasing funding for immigration enforcement, or further militarizing our border communities. AFSC has worked for years to stop detention and deportation and to institute just and humane immigration policies. A roadmap to citizenship will protect TPS, DED, and DACA recipients from policies that would criminalize them and their loved ones and increase persecution through detention and deportation.

AFSC urges principles and visionary leadership on effective immigration policies that embody the best of the nation's values.