



National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence

May 20, 2019

The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF) urges Congress to provide legal status and a permanent pathway to citizenship for the hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants who came here as children with their families and now call the United States home as well as thousands of individuals who risk the loss of Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure. The NTF is comprised of national, state, tribal, territorial and local leadership organizations working to end domestic violence and sexual assault and is committed to ensuring all people are protected from violence and exploitation.

Without congressional action to protect DACA, TPS and DED recipients, these individuals will be forced to live their lives in constant fear that they will be deported at any moment and be separated from their families and communities. Immigrant victims are much more afraid to seek help for violence and at greater risk for violence and exploitation without status. The NTF calls on our policymakers to work together to forge a bi-partisan, humane national immigration policy that provides immigration protections that prevent future abuse and exploitation, promotes public trust, and makes communities safer. Congress will put thousands of immigrant adults and children at increased risk for domestic and sexual violence by not acting.

Since its inception in 2012, DACA has provided nearly 800,000 young people in the United States the opportunity to pursue an education, obtain work authorization, start small businesses, serve in the military, and make significant contributions to their communities. In order to be granted DACA, these young people passed extensive background checks and were required to be enrolled in school, graduate from high school, or serve in the armed forces for our country. DACA recipients are fully integrated and essential members of our communities and are contributing to the health and vitality of American society.

TPS and DED have also served to provide safety and stability to thousands of individuals, including survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. For example, many TPS holders, such as those from the Northern Triangle of Central America,¹ or from Sudan or Haiti,² are from nations where women are fleeing epidemic levels of violence, including gender-based violence. Current TPS holders have become important members of our communities, raising families, paying taxes, and playing a critical role in the economy. In particular, those from El Salvador,

¹ “Women on the Run: First Hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico,” United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2015). Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/56fc31a37.pdf>

² USAID “Haiti: Women and Gender Fact Sheet March 2017” Available at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/FINAL_Women_and_Gender_Fact_Sheet_March_2017.pdf. See also United Nations Development Program “Vulnerable to Violence: Empowering women in South Sudan” (2017). Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2017/06/22/vulnerable-to-violence-empowering-women-in-south-sudan.html>

Sudan, and Nicaragua have been in the United States for over a decade, and some for over twenty years. If forced to return to their countries, current TPS holders and their U.S. citizen children are likely to face extortion, sexual violence, human trafficking, kidnapping, exploitation by gangs, and possibly murder.

Advocates for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence have reported that DACA, TPS, DED, and other forms of immigration relief are critical to protecting our communities and helping survivors feel secure and stable so that they can rebuild their lives and be economically self-sufficient.³ Recent surveys show that the myriad policy changes to immigration enforcement practices during this Administration have led to a climate wherein immigrant victims of sexual and domestic violence “are now less likely to call the police for help or go to court to protect themselves and their children from abuse and violence.”⁴ Safeguarding DACA, TPS, DED, and other immigration relief will protect individuals from deportation and allow survivors and witnesses of crimes like domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking to feel safe to report crimes to police without fear that seeking justice will put them at risk of being deported.

Access to work authorization, driver’s licenses, and education—opportunities available through DACA, TPS, and DED, also increase a survivor’s economic independence. In one survey, three-quarters of women in abusive relationships reported staying with their partner for economic reasons.⁵ A driver’s license provides a means of access to employment, vocational programs, and other educational opportunities, and decreases the ability of abusers to control and exploit immigrant survivors. Employment authorization increases immigrant survivors’ economic security and independence, helps survivors support their families, and helps strengthen the safety of the workplace. Low wages and wage theft, as well as unsafe working conditions—including sexual harassment and violence and human trafficking—are rife in many low-wage industries that employ high numbers of undocumented immigrants.

It is long past time for Congress to protect and defend young people and TPS/ DED recipients who have contributed to and made the United States their home. Rather than risk pushing over a million individuals back into the shadows, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and undermining the health and well-being of families and communities, we urge Congress to enact policies that strengthen families and communities. We also urge you to continue to work in a bipartisan manner to reform our nation’s immigration laws and provide a just, common sense, and humane solution to the current crisis.

For more information, please contact:

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³ National Latin@ Network Casa de Esperanza, “Testimonies From the Field: Benefits of DACA for Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence,” available at https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Quote_Sheet_for_Hill_Visits_2.pdf

⁴ “2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors”, available at <https://bit.ly/2TkIhrI>

⁵ Mary Kay Foundation, “Truth About Abuse Survey Report”, 2012, available at <http://content2.marykayintouch.com/Public/MKACF/Documents/2012survey.pdf>