



Committee on Migration

c/o Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB

3211 Fourth Street NE • Washington DC 20017-1194

202-541-3065 • fax 202-722-8805 • email mrs@uscgb.org • www.usccb.org/mrs

May 21, 2019

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA EMAIL

Dear Representative,

I write on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration (USCCB/COM) to urge you to support the "Dream Act of 2019," the "American Promise Act of 2019," and the "Venezuela TPS Act of 2019," which are all scheduled to be marked up by the House Judiciary Committee this Wednesday, May 22. These important bills, as written, would provide lawful permanent residency and a path to citizenship for qualifying Dreamers and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) holders, as well as TPS for qualifying Venezuelans in the U.S.

The Dream Act of 2019 provides critical protection to Dreamers, immigrant youth who entered the United States as children and know America as their only home. The bill offers young people who qualify "permanent resident status on a conditional basis" and a path to full lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship. To receive the conditional status, the youth must, among other requirements, have entered the U.S. as a child, been continuously present in the United States for at least four years prior to enactment of the bill, meet certain admissibility and security requirements, and have obtained or be pursuing secondary education.

The American Promise Act of 2019 similarly offers essential protections to TPS and DED holders. The bill provides lawful permanent resident status for eligible individuals from countries designated for TPS or DED as of January 1, 2017, and who have been living in the U.S. for at least three years. Eligible individuals must also meet criminal and national security requirements for admissibility, including passing a background check.

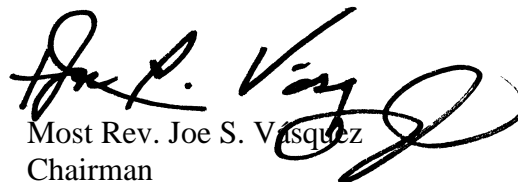
My brother bishops and I support these two bills, as written, and the populations they seek to protect. We believe in defending the dignity of every human being, particularly that of our children and families, and have long stood in solidarity with Dreamers, TPS holders, and their families. These young people contribute to our economy, defend our country through military service, excel academically in our universities, and are leaders in our parishes and communities. It is both our moral duty and in our nation's best interest to protect them and allow them to reach their God-given potential.

Because of the ongoing political unrest, violence, and shortages of food and resources in Venezuela, we believe providing a TPS designation for Venezuela is a moral and compassionate response. Further, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Venezuelan Bishops Conference has recently noted the numerous violations of fundamental human rights inflicted by the police and threats to citizens' access to health and medicine.¹ These alarming conditions have been well-documented and seen firsthand by our Catholic partners on the ground and are reflected in the Department of State's recent travel advisory.²

Consequently, we urge you to support the Venezuela TPS Act of 2019, which would designate Venezuela for TPS for an initial period of 18 months. This bill would give Venezuelans here in the United States an opportunity to live with dignity, work lawfully, and provide for their families' well-being until they can safely return home. Also, this would ensure that Venezuelans who qualify here in the U.S. are not returned to dangerous and life-threatening situations.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation to support the Dream Act of 2019, the American Promise Act of 2019, and the Venezuela TPS Act of 2019. We urge you to oppose any amendments to these bills that seek to undermine the critical protections for these valuable members of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe S. Vasquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Joe S. Vasquez
Chairman
USCCB Committee on Migration

¹ Linda Bordoni, *Venezuelan Bishops Urge Prosecutors to Uphold Human Rights in the Face of Violations*, VATICAN NEWS (Feb. 20, 2019), available at <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2019-02/venezuela-bishops-justice-human-rights-violations.html>.

² *Venezuela Travel Advisory*, DEPARTMENT OF STATE (March 12, 2019), <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/venezuela-travel-advisory.html>.