

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

As our nation grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic, we strongly urge your Administration to automatically extend work authorizations for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients and other impacted immigrants. This simple measure, which is well within your executive authority, will save American lives and avoid further disruptions to our economy. By contrast, going ahead with your Administration's efforts to deport more than a million DACA and TPS recipients would be needlessly cruel and greatly weaken our nation's essential workforce.

DACA provides temporary relief from deportation to immigrants who arrived in the United States as children if they register with the government, pay a fee, and clear criminal and national-security background checks. These young people, known as Dreamers, are American in every way except for their immigration status. More than 800,000 Dreamers have come forward and received DACA, which has allowed them to contribute more fully to their country and their communities in myriad ways. More than 200,000 DACA recipients are working in occupational areas the Department of Homeland Security identifies as part of the "essential critical infrastructure workforce." An estimated 41,700 DACA recipients work in the health care industry, including physicians and physicians in training, intensive care nurses, paramedics, respiratory therapists, nursing assistants, and health technicians. Additionally, an estimated 14,900 DACA recipients are teachers, many of whom are distance educating American children during the pandemic.

TPS currently provides safety in the United States to approximately 411,000 people from 10 countries, the majority of whom have lived in the United States for more than two decades. Like DACA recipients, TPS recipients must register with the government, pay a fee, and clear criminal and national-security background checks. Collectively, more than 90 percent of TPS recipients are nationals of El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti, three of the six countries for which your Administration has attempted to terminate TPS. TPS recipients, like DACA recipients, are vital contributors to our economy and healthcare workforce. More than 130,000 TPS holders are "essential critical infrastructure workers," including 11,600 health care workers.

With U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offices closed to the public, and many USCIS services suspended, it is likely that Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) for many immigrants will expire. USCIS's recent decision to process renewals using previously submitted biometrics means that EAD renewals can be adjudicated without a new biometric appointment. However, EAD renewals are already backlogged and additional processing delays are inevitable due to COVID-19 disruptions. Additionally, with hundreds of millions of Americans under stay-at-home orders, and hundreds of thousands infected with COVID-19, it will be difficult for many immigrants to collect the required information and submit renewal applications and fees within the required timeframe.

Your Administration can immediately ease burdens for thousands of American families, and prevent further, unnecessary economic disruptions during this public health emergency by automatically extending employment authorizations for DACA and TPS recipients and other impacted immigrants. As Jesus Contreras, a DACA recipient paramedic in Houston who is on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19, says, “We’re not only going to have to worry about this pandemic, but we’re going to have to worry about our immigration status and deportation.” Similarly, Aldo Martinez, a DACA recipient paramedic in Fort Myers, Florida who is responding to calls from COVID-19 patients, says that losing work authorization would “create more chaos in an already chaotic situation.” Dr. Manuel Bernal Mejia, a resident in the emergency room at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Chicago, says DACA is “letting me treat and care for patients that are facing this deathly pandemic right now.... If you take away DACA. . . it is at least one doctor less to take care of a patient who is critically ill with this virus.”

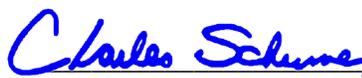
You can order DHS to immediately ensure that Jesus, Aldo, Manuel, and hundreds of thousands of others in our essential workforce are not forced to stop working when the need for their services has never been greater. We urge you to prioritize our nation’s health, safety, and economic wellbeing as we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator

PATTY MURRAY
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