

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

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Contact:

Audrey Martin
Communications Coordinator
The Legal Aid Society
AMartin@legal-aid.org

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Legal Aid and Immigrant Advocates Urge Biden Administration to Re-Designate Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelan Asylum Seekers Fleeing Political and Humanitarian Crisis

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society and 36 immigration advocacy organizations** sent a [letter](#) to the Biden Administration requesting that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan immigrants be [re-designated](#) to include those who arrived in the United States after March 9, 2021, given the ongoing political persecution, collapse of basic services, food insecurity, and rampant violence still pervasive in Venezuela today. The letter also asks that the Administration re-designate the deferred enforced departure period for Venezuelans that expired on July 20, 2022.

The letter states:

As there does not seem to be an end to this crisis in the short term, the United States must act in the wake of such a humanitarian emergency by, once again, providing immigration relief in the form of TPS. Returning to Venezuela would endanger the freedom of many who have been targeted by the Maduro regime due to their social and political activism and expression.

The Biden Administration designated Venezuela’s TPS in March 2021 and extended it in July of 2022, providing urgent immigration relief to over 111,700 Venezuelan nationals living in the United States. However, this relief continues to be needed for those who arrived in the United States after this date, as evidenced by the fact that more than a third of Venezuela’s population is currently chronically malnourished or hungry and 9 million people need medications or healthcare they cannot afford or access.

“Re-designating TPS to include recently arrived Venezuelan nationals is a humane, common-sense solution that will help more than a half-million Venezuelan asylum seekers obtain self-sufficiency in the United States quickly and efficiently,” said **Deborah Lee, attorney-in-charge of the Immigration Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Biden Administration has re-designated TPS status to countries in crisis before, and it has proved extremely beneficial for both the asylum seekers and our country. The United States is a nation made up of immigrants that strengthen and enrich our society, and this Administration must take action to ensure that all immigrants are protected during this time of ongoing economic and political hardship in Venezuela.”

Recently arrived Venezuelan immigrants contribute to our local, state, and federal economies — on average, they are 12% more educated than the general native-born U.S. population, generally have about the same household

income as their native-born counterparts, and create 25% of the businesses in the United States. Undocumented immigrants alone contribute an estimated \$11.74 billion annually in state and local taxes.

TPS re-designation will also provide recently arrived Venezuelans with faster employment authorization and would immediately help with the tremendous backlogs in our Immigration Court system, which currently has more than 1.3 million pending asylum applications and an average processing time of about 4.25 years for one asylum case.

“TPS re-designation will also allow our overburdened enforcement agencies and immigration courts to humanely and efficiently close or adjudicate cases involving Venezuelans. TPS creates a lawful nonimmigrant status that will allow these individuals security and, for some, the ability to be sponsored using one of our legal immigration pathways. Many legal organizations have had to limit their aid to this community with general guidance or limited “pro se” assistance. TPS allows people greater autonomy and security,” said **Professor Lenni B. Benson, distinguished professor at New York Law School.**

“We are very grateful to the Legal Aid Society and to all the organizations and individuals who signed this letter. The situation of undocumented Venezuelan immigrants in the United States is increasingly difficult and precarious, especially in states like Texas and Florida. There are almost 400,000 people who would benefit from the TPS redesignation and that will not only help them but also the United States’ economy. Giving them stability and a work permit will help fill jobs that are currently empty and will translate into prosperity for them, their families and the country,” said **Adelys Ferro, executive director of the Venezuelan American Caucus.**

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org