



United Front of the Haitian Diaspora

1900 B Asbury Street
Evanston, IL 60201, USA

frontunite@gmail.com

312-310-4357; 646-243-6857

December 8, 2017

His Excellency President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC

Ms. Elaine C. Duke, Acting Secretary
Homeland Security
2311 Massachusetts Ave, NW.
Washington, DC

cc:

Senator Mitch McConnell, KY – Leader of the Republican Conference of the U.S. Senate;
Senator Charles Schumer, NY – Leader of the Democratic Conference of the US Senate;
Congressman Kevin McCarthy, TX – Leader of the Republican Conference of the House of Representatives;
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, CA – Leader of the Democratic Conference of the House of Representatives;
Members of the Congressional Black Caucus;
Members of the Progressive Caucus;
Members of the National Haitian-American Elected Officials Network (NHAEON)

**RE: REQUEST FOR HEARING TO RECONSIDER THE DECISION TO TERMINATE
TEMPORARY PROTECTIVE STATUS (TPS) FOR 60,000 HAITIANS**

Dear President Trump and Acting Secretary Duke:

The United Front of the Haitian Diaspora (the United Front) is federation of organizations and individuals (including Haitian-American voters) from throughout the United States, Haiti and elsewhere dedicated to mobilizing Haitian-Americans and other Haitians throughout the Diaspora to increase our civic engagement wherever we live and to help Haiti develop. **We are kindly asking for a hearing to reconsider your decision to terminate TPS for 60,000 Haitian beneficiaries of the program because the decision failed to take all of the relevant facts into account and, therefore, you have misapplied the US policy regarding when the TPS policy should be enacted towards a particular group of foreign nationals. The designation and extension of TPS is not arbitrary or simply characterized by the word Temporary. Its main concept is one of Protection Mr. President. The policy states that:**

“The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a foreign country for TPS due to conditions in the country that temporarily prevent the country's nationals from returning safely, or in certain circumstances, where the country is unable to handle the return of its nationals adequately...” (Emphasis added).

We submit our request in partnership with other organizations and personalities who, like us, are dedicated to the progress of Haiti and its Diaspora (The list of partner entities is attached and others will soon join this request.)

The beneficiaries were granted protective status in the aftermath of the 7.3 earthquake that brutally hit the country in January 2010. Because the calamity wrecked Haiti's economic nerve center, the entire country got significantly affected. The earthquake caused human life losses estimated at 230,000. The injured were assessed at more than 300,000 and the displaced at about 1.5 million, most of whom having had to sustain sudden homelessness for a long time. Per credible estimates, approximately 40% of the housing stock, 60% of government and administrative buildings, and 80% of schools in that nerve center (the massive metropolitan area) got destroyed. Further, 25% of civil servants lost their lives.

We (the Unite Front and its members) certainly are thankful that you have granted our compatriots until July 2019 to achieve legal status in the United States. However, of most concern to us is the contingent order that, should they fail to attain such standing within the given period, they leave the U.S. and return to Haiti. We respectfully but forcefully disagree with your determination that these beneficiaries no longer need Protection, allegedly due to sound improvement in Haiti's circumstances. In fact, the reverse is quite the case: the country is not faring better at all.

We assure you, Mr. President, that given current conditions, it is impossible for Haiti to absorb 60,000+ individuals back into the social/economic life of the nation, whether now or in July 2019. This assessment which is widely shared throughout the U.S. and beyond is founded on a just application of the U.S. immigration policy for granting TPS, and on account of ongoing facts relative to Haiti's welfare.

Please allow us to review these facts briefly.

- The total cost of direct damages imposed by the earthquake exceeded \$9 billion, or 120% of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP). Once the resulting negative multiplier effects are factored in, such cost is amplified by more than 50 percent, to nearly \$15 billion or twice Haiti's GDP.
- To the above must be added recurring natural disasters (hurricanes, floods...) that, through the 2000s and this decade, have regularly caused severe ravages to the country's economy (crops and livestock destroyed) and infrastructure (badly damaged roads, bridges...). An example is Hurricane Matthew. In October 2016, it hit Haiti's southern peninsula, the nation's breadbasket. Up to 1,000 people died and total damages were estimated at 23% of GDP, or \$2 billion. As a result, the prospect of famine looms large in this area according to the USA World Food Program.
- Haiti's rate of economic growth, which was already anemic before the tragedy, has not been able to return it to its pre-earthquake level. As a result, job creation has been negligible, if not absent, and there is no indication whatsoever that the situation will improve in the run-up to July 2019. Thus, Haiti has not generated the economic development activities to induce the employment levels necessary to integrate its current unemployed, let alone the 60,000+ who would be returning home in July 2019. As a matter of fact, job scarcity is so severe that the strong, the educated and the young have been leaving in droves, to go everywhere. As of 2017, Haiti has already lost in excess of 100,000 able workers and other skilled citizens to Chile, Brazil,

Canada, and other nations.

- Since the turn of the century, such unceasing problems have been made worse by rising harms inflicted to the nation by natural disasters due to climatic phenomena such as El Niño. Haiti's imports rose steadily as its exports shrank, and now imports are more than five times the value of exports. Due to the incapacity of the economy to generate sufficient tax receipts, it became increasingly difficult for Haitian authorities to meet the State's budget needs. Hence profound imbalances in Haiti's Balance of Payments, as well as a steady depreciation of the national currency (the gourde), which went from 5 gourdes for \$1 three decades ago, to 64 gourdes for \$1 today.
- All these factors came in aggravation of a quite difficult pre-earthquake socioeconomic state of affairs. They collided to cause Haiti to rank in the bottom group of countries in the United Nations (UN)' Human Development Index, while upward of 70% of its people survive on less than \$2 per day, and in tough living and sanitary conditions, and the education system is profoundly deprived.
- As if this was not all enough, in October 2010 an outbreak of cholera swept across the country. By July 2011, nearly 6,000 had died and 216,000 were infected. Although the UN admitted its responsibility in the introduction of the epidemic in the country through one group among the troops it brought in for post-earthquake support, that organization has not yet lived up to its promise of providing proper resources to eradicate the scourge, which has continued, unabated.
- The nearly \$6 billion disbursed in official aid to Haiti after the earthquake failed to yield any notable improvement in the country's plight. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private contractors have been the intermediate recipients of most of these funds. The Government of Haiti has received just 1 percent of humanitarian aid, and 15 to 21 percent of longer-term relief aid. Yet, NGOs appear to have limited accountability. Despite the use of U.S. public funds, NGOs undergo few evaluations of services delivered, lives saved, or mistakes made. Most importantly, Haitians are disillusioned with the overall lack of progress, transparency, and accountability.
- In the end, one ray of light for Haiti in the midst of all this disappointment remains the strong and unconditional support it receives from its Diaspora, including the 60,000+ individuals targeted by the TPS termination announcement. Specifically, Haitians living abroad contribute annually to their native land, remittances estimated at the equivalent of nearly 30% of GDP, or \$2.4 billion.

To be true, Mr. President and Ms. Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Duke, the 60,000+ Haitian nationals qualify and, for the foreseeable future, will continue to qualify for TPS. They deserve reconsideration not only based on the host of facts spelled out above, but also because, together with other compatriots in the Diaspora, they represent Haiti's lifeblood.

Even the American society would suffer from the termination of TPS. As potential deportees, many will resort to an underground economy and, suddenly, become refugees whom society would have to pursue to apprehend, detain and deport.

According to a letter from the Haitian Ambassador to the U.S., Mr. Paul Altidor: "Our research, as well as our conversations with U.S. law enforcement and elected officials representing districts and states where Haitian TPS recipients reside, have shown that our nationals have been exemplary law-abiding residents and pose no threat to the security of the United States or its people. Moreover, Haitian TPS recipients have not constituted a financial burden on U.S. taxpayers. Rather, Haitian TPS recipients have made significant economic contributions to their communities here in the United States as acknowledged publicly by Congressional

leaders, from the Democratic and Republican sides, as well as Mayors, Governors, and business leaders”.

Terminating TPS in July 2019 would force the Government of Haiti not only to halt its ongoing, short-term development efforts, but also to focus its very limited resources on receiving an influx of returning citizens. Under these circumstances, we fear that a non-renewal may cause TPS beneficiaries to find alternative and ill-advised ways to remain in the United States, and would also embolden trans-national human traffickers and cartels to prey upon this group of vulnerable individuals; such an outcome would not be in the best interest of either of our governments.

We remain confident, Mr. President, that at this precarious juncture, you will reconsider your decision, and re-design those 60,000+ Haitian nationals who found refuge in the U.S. after the earthquake, as being qualified for protection under the Temporary Protective Status policy and for successive extensions until actual facts on the ground establish that Haiti has the capacity and resources to absorb these beneficiaries. Thank you.

Respectfully,

S/ Lionel Jean-Baptiste

Lionel Jean-Baptiste, President
United Front of the Haitian Diaspora
www.haitianunitedfront.org

cc: Ambassador Paul Altidor
Embassy of the Republic of Haiti
Washington, DC

The US based Founding Members of the United Front:

ORGANIZATIONS:

Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti
President: Attorney Marie Lynn Toussaint
Chicago, IL.

Society for Haitian Research, Inc (SHR)
Monalisa Ferrari, Chairperson
Brooklyn, NY

Haitian American Grassroots Coalition (HAGC)
President: Jean Robert Lafortune

Miami, Florida

The Haitian Alliance of Georgia

President: M. Frantz Bourget

Atlanta, Georgia

Rethink Haiti, Inc.

President: Major Joseph Bernadel (Ret.) US Army

Boynton Beach, Florida

Haitian Diaspora Working Group

President: Jean Robert Lafortune

Miami, Florida

National Haitian American Elected Officials Network (NHAEON)

President: Attorney Joseph Makhandal Champagne

Toms River, NJ

Haiti Renewal Alliance

President: Firmin Backer, BS MS MA

Washington, DC

National Haitian Student Alliance

President: Lucson Joseph

Florida USA.

Haitian Resource Development Foundation (HRDF)

President: Aldy Castor MD

Weston, Florida

Haitian Alliance and Land Trust

President: Jean-Claude Bourget

Atlanta, GA

INDIVIDUALS (AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION IF ANY):

Lionel Jean-Baptiste, Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti

Chicago

Max Gustave Joseph, Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti
Tamarac, FL

Alix Claude, Haitian Congress to fortify Hait
Chicago, IL.

Dr. Joël Roy Augustin, Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti,
Chicago, IL.

Nom: Dr. Jean Benito Mercier, Kansas City Haitian Association
Adresse: Nassau, Bahamas

Dr. Ludovic Comeau Jr., Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti
Chicago, IL

Dr. Marielys Ewa, DDS, Dusable Heritage Association
Chicago, IL

Wund Hyppolite
North Carolina

Yvans Morisseau, Haitian Diaspora Working Group
Miami, FL

Charlot Lucien
Boston, MA

Albert Decady, Haiti Renewal Alliance
Washington, DC

Jacky Poteau
Boston, MA

Manes Pierre
MA

Josue Lucien,
Boston, MA

Dr. Paul Lamos,
Boston, MA

Wesley Madhere
Atlanta, GA

Wilner Auguste
Boston, MA

Ivelyn Dalmacy
NY, NY

Louis Bosquet
FL

Henry Desrosiers
NY

Marie Presmy,
Washington, DC

Sabine Albert
NY, NY