

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



May 12, 2017

Governor Rick Scott
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
VIA EMAIL

Re: Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Haiti

Dear Governor Scott:

My brother bishops and I much enjoyed our breakfast meeting at the Mansion and being with you at the Red Mass. I truly appreciate your commitment and the time you have dedicated to furthering our ongoing dialogue and engagement. May God continue to bless you as you work to lead our great state.

I write to expand briefly on the issue of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Haiti, which we touched upon when we last spoke. As I noted, I am deeply concerned about the plight that would befall of over 50,000 Haitians who are living and working lawfully in the United States with TPS if the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not extend TPS for Haitians. Due to statutory obligations, we expect DHS to signal its intention to extend or terminate TPS for Haiti by May 23, 2017.

Connection to Vulnerable Haitians

As a leader of the Catholic Church, I am both called to protect the vulnerable and lead my flock. I know that many of these Haitian TPS holders are truly vulnerable and that they are afraid to return to – and, in some cases, cannot safely return to – their country given the destruction and food shortages resulting from natural disasters such as Hurricane Matthew. As a Creole speaker, I have close ties to the Haitian diaspora. I have witnessed firsthand the inspiring hard work and resiliency of many Haitian families who live in our community and worship in our church.

Haitians in Florida helping rebuild Haiti

These families have persevered and provide invaluable remittances and support for their impoverished families back in Haiti. I am heartened to know that these remittances will help rebuild their nation. And, as a native Floridian and a long-time Miami resident, I also recognize the contributions of Haitians to South Florida.

Concerns for family unity and stability

Further, I would draw your attention to the fact that many Haitian TPS holders have U.S. citizen children or spouses. Consequently, a failure to extend TPS would result in many painful cases of family separation and destabilization. It would also undoubtedly lead to thousands of Haitians residing and working in an unauthorized manner in Florida. Such consequences are unjust and unacceptable. Families, regardless of their members' immigration statuses, should not be separated and should be allowed to thrive. Without the TPS extension, however, I fear that we will see families torn apart and parents separated from their children unnecessarily.

Supporting the rule of law

Additionally, I firmly believe in the rule of law, and I believe we must work within our legal system to avoid unauthorized immigration. This is yet another reason why TPS, an available legal, albeit temporary, measure, should be utilized until we are able to fix our broken immigration system through legislative reform.

Requesting outreach to Trump Administration for TPS extension

I am grateful for your consideration of my concerns, and I know that you care deeply about the well-being of our state and its unique communities. I urge you to consider raising this request for an 18-month extension of TPS for Haiti with the Trump Administration as I believe that it is an important issue to the well-being of the state of Florida.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, D.D.
President & Archbishop of Miami