December 8, 2020

The Honorable Joseph Biden  
President-Elect of the United States of America  
Washington, DC

Dear President-Elect Biden:

We, the undersigned 234 organizations, urge your incoming Administration to immediately grant a new Temporary Protected Status designation for Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador and include Guatemala as a consequence of the severe devastation caused by hurricanes Eta and Iota in Central America immediately after taking office in January 2021.

Under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, the U.S. government can immediately provide protection for thousands of Central American immigrants who are unable to return to their home countries due to devastation caused by recent consecutive hurricanes and tropical storms which aggravated dire conditions in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Nationals of those countries living in the U.S. are a key source of financial support to families in Central America and will also send goods to their loved ones in the region. They also provide support to multiple Central American community and advocacy organizations actively working with allies and communities on the ground that have been unable to rely on national governments which have been slow to respond. Temporary Protected Status is a life-saving tool. In 1998, the same Central American region was devastated by Hurricane Mitch which left at least 11,000 people dead and thousands missing. A new designation can help stabilize the region while the Central American governments work to provide emergency aid to those impacted by these storms, and already suffering the economic effects of the current global health pandemic, which has also negatively impacted public health and the regional economy.

On November 4, 2020 Hurricane Eta made landfall in the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua as a category 4 hurricane and weakened to a tropical depression before entering Honduras. Two weeks later, and only 15 miles apart, Hurricane Iota made landfall again in the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua as a category 4 storm. Both hurricanes impacted Central America with strong winds and heavy rains damaging critical infrastructure such as airports in Honduras, hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, and water systems. Remote communities, already suffering from the health and socio-economic fallout of COVID-19 are particularly vulnerable to the double burden of a pandemic and the devastation wrought by Eta and Iota. Initial reports of the impacts of both Hurricanes Eta and Iota on these countries estimate even greater devastation than what Hurricane Mitch caused.
The aftermath of these storms are emerging as a major humanitarian crisis in Central America. More than 4.9 million people from Panama to Belize are affected. The most severe impacts are being felt in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, but also several areas in El Salvador. In all the affected areas, the communities most impacted are Black and Indigenous: Garifuna, Miskito, many indigenous groups who already suffer from historical patterns of exclusion and discrimination, resulting in disproportionate levels of poverty and geographic isolation. Besides the loss of life, thousands of families lost their homes and livelihoods in the midst of a deadly pandemic. It would be unconscionable to return Central Americans seeking relief from the hurricanes back to an emergency and humanitarian crisis in their countries from which it will take years to recover.

We stand in solidarity with communities in Central America and ask that your Administration join us in standing with them by using its power to grant immediate protection in the form of Temporary Protected Status to nationals of those countries living in the U.S. left vulnerable by the devastation and existing structural barriers to a timely, relevant, and sustainable recovery in Central America.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter. Should you need additional information or have further questions please do not hesitate to contact Mony Ruiz-Velasco at Alianza Americas via email at mruizvelasco@alianzaamericas.org or phone at (773) 428-0164 or Laura Esquivel at Hispanic Federation at lequivel@hispanicfederation.org or 202.210.2096.

Sincerely,

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Alianza Americas
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
America’s Voice
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Friends Service Committee
American Humanist Association
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Arab Resource and Organizing Center
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Asylee Women Enterprise
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Bender's Immigration Bulletin (LexisNexis)
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Cabrinic Immigrant Services of NYC
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Chispa, LCV
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Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County Inc.
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Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
COPAL Minnesota
Corazon Latino
CRECEN
Culinary Union
Desert Support for Asylum Seekers
DIF Municipal
Dolores Street Community Services
Dreamer Fund
Durango Unido en Chicago
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
El/La Para TransLatinas
Equality California
Equality North Carolina
Erie Neighborhood House
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Family Action Network Movement
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
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Women's Refugee Commission (WRC)
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Yo'on ixim
Dear President Donald J Trump,
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

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