



**Statement to the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary pertaining to its hearing entitled  
*Protecting Dreamers and TPS Recipients on Wednesday, March 6, 2019***

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a U.S.-based human rights organization with over 40,000 members and supporters across the country, writes to express our grave concern at attempts by the Trump administration to cancel Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), for nearly 1.3 million U.S. residents. We are grateful to the Committee for investigating the harmful effects of these cancellations on innumerable families and communities across the United States, and we call upon Congress to support a legislative path to permanent residency for DACA recipients, DED holders, and TPS holders and continue to expand protections as in-country situations require.

The Trump administration's attempted cancellation of these programs threatens incalculable economic and human costs for families and communities across the United States. This action directly threatens innocent people, who have rightly relied on the goodwill of the U.S. government, with loss of legal status and, in some cases, deportation to unsafe conditions. This includes TPS holders who have sought refuge from ongoing natural disasters, active conflicts, civil wars, and pervasive violence. In Central America, there is documented evidence that people recently deported from the United States face added risk of being targeted for persecution and extortion by criminal networks.<sup>1</sup>

Removing individuals' status after they have built lives in the United States exposes thousands of families to the risk of separation from their loved ones, while also depriving the country of the contributions DACA recipients, DED holders, and TPS holders make to our shared communities as parents, workers, business owners, taxpayers, neighbors, and friends. Currently, nearly 300,000 U.S. citizen children have at least one parent who is a TPS holder.<sup>2</sup> If their parents lose legal status and are rendered vulnerable to deportation, these families will face heart-rending decisions as to whether to separate or return to countries where their children have never lived, and where their educations, safety, and future opportunities may be in jeopardy.

The human consequences of the actions of this White House are not abstract or hypothetical. Last month, UUSC staff were honored to join the National TPS Alliance at the TPS People's Summit in Maryland. During the summit, we saw the production of *The Last Dream*, a play written and performed by the U.S. citizen children of TPS holders in Massachusetts. This play, which was also presented to members of Congress, depicts the lived experiences and reactions of children of TPS holders from El Salvador on the night that the TPS termination for the country was announced. The nightmarish reality of family separation that these children face is depicted in the form of a skeletal figure that looms over the stage. At the end of the play, one of the children turns to this figure and challenges it, imploring through her tears, "Have you ever known what it is to be loved?"

Any governmental policy that results in direct harm to children is unacceptable. Further, it goes against the values and history of the United States to leave any individuals in harm's way, members of our shared communities who have placed their lives and trust in the good word and intentions of the U.S. government. As the poet Stephen Spender once wrote, "*No cause is just unless it guards the innocent / As sacred trust.*" We urge you, as members of Congress, to uphold that sacred trust and to protect the many families who depend on DACA, DED, and TPS.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Amber Moulton, Joshua Leach, and Kevin Ferreira, "Waiting for Refuge: Benefits and Challenges of the Central American Minors In-Country Refugee Processing Program (CAM)," UUSC, December 2016, pp. 16-17 [https://www.uusc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Waiting-for-Refuge\\_December-2016.pdf](https://www.uusc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Waiting-for-Refuge_December-2016.pdf); Sarah Stillman, "When Deportation Is a Death Sentence," *The New Yorker*, January 18, 2015 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/15/when-deportation-is-a-death-sentence>; Binh X, Ngo, "Women and LGBTQ Deportees Face Compounded Dangers Upon Return," Center for American Progress, August 10, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2018/08/10/454637/women-lgbtq-deportees-face-compounded-dangers-upon-return/>

<sup>2</sup> Fabiola Santiago, "Another separation crisis looms — this time for 273,000 American children," *Miami Herald*, July 12, 2018. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/fabiola-santiago/article214722630.html>.