

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We are writing to express support for the reauthorization of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone (affected countries) due to continued impact of the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (Ebola) in West Africa. **We respectfully urge you to redesignate and extend the existing TPS designation for the affected countries for eighteen months, from November 21, 2016 through May 21, 2018.** The lingering effects due to the outbreak of Ebola and continued recovery challenges support this eighteen month extension.

Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone continue to face a state of public health emergency. As recently as August 2016, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wrote that due to damaged infrastructure, “desperate shortages” of health workers, and economic losses, including the unwillingness of some investors to return, Liberia is “in a severely weakened condition” and “will take years” to recover[1]. While the affected countries have made great strides in eradicating Ebola, extreme health, economic, and societal conditions continue to exist.

First, the risk of renewed outbreaks remains in the affected countries. Ebola can persist within the body for extended periods and can be sexually transmissible for a year after full recovery. As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that clusters of Ebola outbreaks are likely to reemerge. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone have been declared Ebola-free multiple times – the most recent declaration taking place as recently as June 1, 2016 – only for Ebola to re-emerge on multiple different occasions.

Second, Ebola caused substantial, temporary disruptions to the health systems of the affected countries. Prior to the outbreak, the affected countries suffered from a healthcare professional shortage[2]. There was only one doctor for every 100,000 people in Guinea and Liberia, and only 3,435 hospital beds for a population of nearly 11.5 million Guinean populations[3]. With health professionals 21 to 32 times more likely to be infected by Ebola[4], the epidemic further weakened an already fragile health system. Access to adequate healthcare and health professionals is not expected to return to pre-Ebola levels until 2017 or beyond.

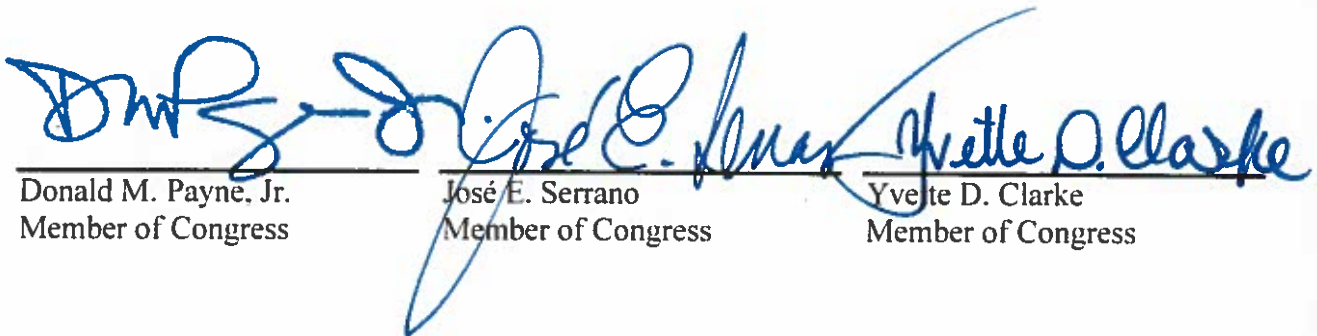
Third, Ebola caused substantial, temporary disruptions to the economies of the affected countries. Pre-Ebola expected economic growth in Sierra Leone was 11.3 percent. That number fell to just four percent[5]. Guinea and Liberia also experienced a large reduction in expected economic growth[6]. Additionally, according to the World Bank, the economic repercussions of Ebola include an estimated \$2.2 billion lost in 2015 in the gross domestic product (GDP) of the three countries[7].

Finally, the previous six month extension of TPS for the affected countries raises concern. In March 2016, while there were still active cases of the Ebola virus, DHS extended the TPS program for six months, instead of eighteen months[8]. Since redesignation of the Ebola-affected nations, four other countries have received TPS extensions—El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Syria—each of them for eighteen months. These conditions create a serious, but temporary, condition that makes it unsafe and unfeasible for nationals of the three countries currently in the U.S. to return.

Over 16,000 children were orphaned as a result of Ebola[9]. The governments of the affected countries have the arduous task of re-integrating approximately 17,000 Ebola survivors[10], many of whom are experiencing intense hardships such as, poverty, persecution, lingering symptoms, and risk of potential re-infection. In addition to preventing another outbreak, there are significant economic, social, and political challenges for the three governments to tackle.

We respectfully urge you to give full and favorable consideration for the reauthorization of Temporary Protected Status for Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and to redesignate and extend the existing TPS designation for the affected countries for eighteen months, from November 21, 2016 through May 21, 2018.

Sincerely,



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate

Karen Bass

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Joe Crowley

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Member of Congress

Gwen Moore

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Nydia Velázquez


Nydia Velázquez
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee

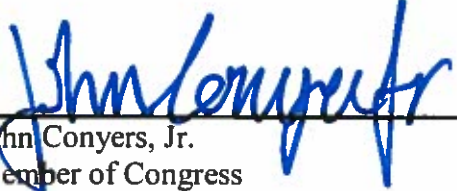
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

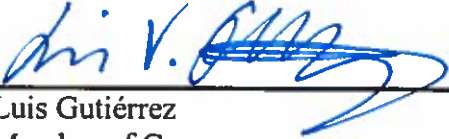
Paul Tonko

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress


John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Luis Gutiérrez
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

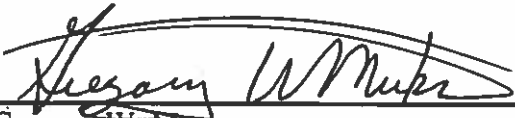

Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Keith M. Ellison
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Linda J. Sánchez

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

- [1] Time. 2016. "Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: 2 Years After Ebola, Liberia Is a Changed Nation". Accessed September 12, 2016. <http://time.com/4440771/liberian-president-ebola-recovery/>.
- [2] OXFAM. 2014. "The global health workforce crisis: what we can learn from the Ebola outbreak". Accessed September 12, 2016. <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2014/11/the-global-health-workforce-crisis>.
- [3] Id.
- [4] David K Evansa, Markus Goldstein, Anna Popova. 2015. "Health-care worker mortality and the legacy of the Ebola epidemic." *The Lancet Global Health* 3 (8): e439–e440. Accessed December 22, 2015. doi:10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00065-0. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214109X15000650>.
- [5] The World Bank. 2015. "Ebola: Most African Countries Avoid Major Economic Loss but Impact on Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone Remains Crippling". Accessed September 9, 2016. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/01/20/ebola-most-african-countries-avoid-major-economic-loss-but-impact-on-guinea-liberia-sierra-leone-remains-crippling>.
- [6] Id.
- [7] The World Bank. 2014. GDP growth (annual percent). Accessed September 12, 2016. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.
- [8] U.S.C Citizenship and Immigration Services. 2016. "Temporary Protected Status Extended for Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone for Six Months". Accessed September 12, 2016. <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/temporary-protected-status-extended-guinea-liberia-and-sierra-leone-six-months>.
- [9] UNICEF. 2015. "More than 16,000 children lost parents or caregivers to Ebola - many are taken in by the communities: UNICEF". Accessed September 11, 2016. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_79742.html.
- [10] World Health Organization. 2016. "Ebola Situation Report- 16 March 2016". Accessed September 12, 2016. <http://apps.who.int/ebola/current-situation/ebola-situation-report-16-march-2016>