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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We write regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Northern Triangle of Central America, where violence continues to compel unaccompanied children and families to flee their communities in search of safety. As the United States continues to support efforts to address the root causes of migration in the Northern Triangle, we also urge you to seek creative solutions to facilitate an orderly and legal process for children and families fleeing violence to seek asylum.

In particular, we encourage you to allow more vulnerable Central Americans to seek protection in a legal and orderly manner by expanding the Protection Transfer Agreement (PTA). Under the PTA, the United States, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the government of Costa Rica have agreed to transfer small numbers of vulnerable individuals to Costa Rica while their claims for refugee status are adjudicated, and to resettle those who qualify for refugee status to the United States or other countries in the region. This program has provided life-saving protection to a small number of families and individuals who have suffered persecution by their governments, or whose governments failed to protect them from persecution.

We encourage you to commit to resettling a greater number of those families and individuals from the PTA who qualify for refugee status, and to expand the capacity of the PTA to temporarily shelter refugees. Likewise, we urge you to assess the feasibility of expanding in-country refugee processing of PTA individuals referred for refugee protection, which would facilitate the ability of families and individuals to legally and safely resettle in the United States.

In the long-term, we are convinced that the best solution for both the United States and Central America is to reduce the shocking levels of violence that are destabilizing the region. We are firm supporters of the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, but we also recognize that Central America's challenges will not be solved overnight. In the short term, the expansion of the PTA will relieve pressure at the U.S. border and reduce human suffering, providing those in need of immediate protection to a safe and orderly alternative to making the dangerous and difficult journey across Mexico.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important request.

Sincerely,

NORMA J. TORRES
Co-Chair
Central America Caucus

ELIOT L. ENGEL
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

ZOE LOFGREN
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security
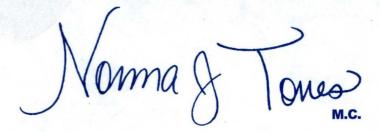House Committee on the Judiciary

Norma J Torres

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

November 13, 2018

The Honorable Norma J. Torres
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Torres:

Thank you for your September 13, 2018, letter to President Trump. The White House referred your letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) appreciates your continued support of the U.S Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). We are proud of the USRAP's longstanding history of resettling some of the world's most vulnerable refugees in the United States. Likewise, we understand the important role that refugee resettlement plays in supporting our country's national security and foreign policy interests.

On October 4, 2018, the President signed the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and set the refugee admissions ceiling at 30,000. This includes 3,000 refugee admissions from Latin America/Caribbean, an increase of 1,500 from the previous fiscal year. The ceiling takes into account the operational realities associated with security measures to protect national security and public safety, as well as the need to conduct credible fear screenings of aliens seeking asylum at our borders and address the backlog of affirmative asylum cases, which stands at about 320,000 (approximately 492,000 individuals), the highest since 2002.

As noted in your letter, vulnerable individuals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras may be transferred to Costa Rica via the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA), where they will undergo refugee processing before being resettled to the United States or another third country. Cases not requiring immediate transfer to Costa Rica may be considered for refugee protection after being screened and interviewed by USCIS officers in their countries of origin. USCIS continues to process refugee applicants via the PTA program.

The United States is committed to providing humanitarian support for refugees. It is important to note, however, that this support extends beyond the refugee admissions program. Our response encompasses a broad protection-based immigration structure including the asylum program and generous humanitarian assistance overseas.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

L. Francis Cissna
Director